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Allegiances

ThunderClan:

Leader: Squirrelstar- Dark ginger she-cat with green eyes and a white paw

Deputy: Ivypool- Silver-gray tabby she-cat

Medicine cats: Mothstripe- Pretty golden tabby she-cat with a long, fluffy tail

Twistedfoot- Brown tom with a twisted paw and green eyes

Flamedawn- Dark ginger tom with blue eyes and white paws

Warriors:

Jaywing- Gray tabby she-cat with blue eyes and a torn ear

Mossheart- Black and silver she-cat with green eyes

Whitewing- Small snowy white she-cat with green eyes

Berrynose- Cream colored tom with a thick, short stump for a tail, apprentice- Dewpaw

Blossomfall- Tortoiseshell and white she-cat with petal-shaped white patches

Bramblehawk- Dark brown tom with black stripes and yellow eyes

Sootwing- Gray she-cat

Firestorm- Fire-colored tom with blue eyes and a gray ear-tip

Thistlepatch- Gray and white she-cat with strange violet eyes

Snowbreeze- White tom with blue eyes

Ambertuft- Dark ginger she-cat with green eyes

Falconflight- Dark brown tom with green eyes

Willowbrook- Gray and white tabby she-cat

Moonshine- Black and silver-white she-cat

Smallfeather- Pale yellow small tom with blue eyes

Palewhisker- Black and white she-cat, apprentice- Cloudpaw

Smoky- Gray and white tom

Breezestorm- White tom with gray paws

Ripplewind- Cream-white tom with a mask-like pattern around his eyes

Apprentices:

Dewpaw- Gray tom with green eyes

Cloudpaw- Fluffy white she-cat

Queens:

Fluffypelt- White she-cat with brown spots and blue eyes (Mother to Snowbreeze's kits: Frostkit, Lightkit, and Sharpkit)

Coriander- Tortoiseshell and white she-cat with amber eyes (Mother to Smoky's kits: Stalkkit, Stormkit, and Monarchkit)

Elders:

Graystripe- Gray tom with a darker gray stripe

Ferncloud- Gray she-cat with green eyes

Flower- Very old cream-white she-cat

Poppyfrost- Dappled, pale tortoiseshell and white she-cat with a small stub for a tail

WindClan:

Leader: Gorsestar- Mottled pale gray tabby tom with blue eyes

Deputy: Doveclaw- Gray she-cat with white paws and blue eyes and a torn ear

Medicine cats: Kestrelflight- Gray tom with white splotches

Rabbittail- Light brown tom with green eyes and a short tail

Warriors:

Eaglefeather- Golden tom with green eyes and a scarred muzzle

Antpelt- Lithe brown tom with one black ear

Larkwing- Pale brown tabby she-cat

Sedgewhisker- Light brown tabby she-cat

Slightfoot- Black tom with a flash of white on his chest

Windflower- Small light brown tabby she-cat

Thornstem- Gold-brown tom with golden eyes

Featherpelt- Gray tabby she-cat

Elders:

Whitetail- Small white she-cat

RiverClan:

Leader: Flowerstar- Tortoiseshell and white she-cat with green eyes

Deputy: Reedwhisker- Slender black tom

Medicine cats: Mothwing- Dappled dark golden she-cat

Willowshine- Sleek thick-furred dark gray tabby she-cat

Sapbriar- Milky-white she-cat with gray paws

Warriors:

Rust- Large dark brown tom with amber eyes

Duskpelt- Brown tabby she-cat

Pineshade- Dark ginger tom with a black splotch on his back

Curlfeather- Pale brown she-cat, apprentice- Owlpaw

Podlight- Sturdy gray and white tom, apprentice- Jaypaw

Mallownose- Light brown tom

Petalfur- Gray and white she-cat with amber eyes

Lizardtail- Light brown tom

Brightmorning- White she-cat with blue eyes, apprentice- Brackenpaw

Beetleshell- Black tom with brown paws

Iceriver- Fluffy white she-cat with ice-blue eyes

Apprentices:

Brackenpaw- Tortoiseshell she-cat

Owlpaw- Brown tabby tom

Jaypaw- Gray tom

ShadowClan:

Leader: Tigerstar- Big dark tiger-striped tabby tom with amber eyes and a torn ear

Deputy: Tawnypelt- Pale tortoiseshell she-cat

Medicine cat: Ravenbreeze- Small black she-cat

Warriors:

Ebonyfur- Black tom with green eyes

Cloverfoot- Gray tabby she-cat

Dawnpelt- Cream-furred she-cat

Scorchfur- Dark gray tom

Snowbird- Pure white she-cat

Strikestone- Brown-striped tabby tom

Shrewfoot- Gray she-cat with black feet

Smokefoot- Black tom

Beenose- White she-cat with black ears

Yarrowleaf- Ginger she-cat with yellow eyes

Berryheart- Black and white she-cat

Apprentices:

Crowpaw- Black tom with yellow eyes

Frogpaw- Brown tabby tom

Smokepaw- Dark gray tabby she-cat

Elders:

Littlecloud- Small, thin brown tabby tom with blue eyes

Oakfur- Small brown tom

Rogues:

Leader: Darktail- Big white tom with black spots around his blue eyes and a long black tail

Deputy: Thorn- Large golden tom

Cats:

Crowfrost- Black and white tom

Shimmer- Black and white she-cat

Moon- Silver she-cat

Redwillow- Mottled brown and ginger tom

Snow- White she-cat

Gravel- Slender gray tom

Sleekwhisker- Golden she-cat with yellow

Juniperclaw- Sleek black tom

Other cats outside Clans:

Hawk- Muscular brown tabby tom with amber eyes

Coco- Small pale brown tom

Lucky- Black tom (kittypet)

Phoenix- Slender, long-legged flame-colored she-cat with green eyes (kittypet)

Echo- Pale brown she-cat with green eyes and a white paw

Chafree- Plump pale brown tom (kittypet)

Arbonx- Black tom with amber eyes and a skunk-like pattern (kittypet)

Prologue

A gray-blue she-cat was narrowing her eyes as she stared down, looking into the wavy portal on the ground. It was a view of the ThunderClan nursery, where a fluffy white she-cat lay. Three kits were resting against her belly.

A gray tom with dark blue eyes and a half-ear padded over to the blue she-cat. He swished his tail. "What are you looking at, Bluestar?" The tom sighed.

The she-cat didn't take her gaze away from the white she-cat with kits. "A huge threat is coming to ThunderClan," She murmured.

"Like what? Fluffypelt's kits? Come on, they're-"

"Ashstar, you know what I'm talking about, right? It's about Sharpkit. Unfortunately, we can not steer him away from his destiny. It is only his own paws that can control him now," Bluestar sighed, looking at the gray tom.

"Don't we have the power to visit him in his dreams and convince him to not train in the Dark Forest?" Ashstar asked, his tail lashing.

"I'm afraid we do not. StarClan is powerful, but it doesn't necessarily control a cat's fate," Bluestar sighed, putting her paw in front of the wavy-portal. It swished and faded away, stars replacing it. Bluestar's head hung. "We'll just have to hope that Sharpkit does...well."

"And what if he doesn't? We should warn ThunderClan before-"

"Heh, young leader, you've still got much to learn. Maybe a little more time in StarClan and you'll be a bit more wise?" Bluestar cut off Ashstar with a look of slight amusement, slight seriousness in her eyes. "The best we can do is hope."

"Really?' Ashstar unsheathed his claws, griping the star-twinkling grass. "Hoping does nothing, believe me, I've tried. If you can't warn

them, I'll try," Ashstar meowed, getting to his paws.

"You'll do no such thing," Bluestar growled, bristling. "You're still hotheaded, even in StarClan. You still want everything your way, don't you?" She asked, staring at Ashstar.

"We're StarClan!" Ashstar broke the silence. "What good will it do by not warning them and just watching the Clan get destroyed?" He growled.

Bluestar moved closer to him. "My hopes are that Sharpkit won't be so bad. Warning the Clan about a three-moon old kit wouldn't seem that serious. We'll..."

"What?"

"Wait for something to happen," Bluestar finished.

"Really?" Ashstar asked as she began to pad away. "You'll let this kit destroy my Clan?" He hissed.

"It's my Clan as well as your's. It's *ThunderClan*," Bluestar murmured, lashing her tail. "I've given up on ThunderClan anyway...."

A flame-colored tabby tom padded from the undergrowth, his emerald-green eyes shining. "Hello, Ashstar," He mewed.

Ashstar turned. "Firestar," He breathed. "How long have you been standing there?"

"Don't worry, I've not been there long. Listen, don't worry about Bluestar. She's just old," Firestar purred.

"I'm worrying," Ashstar hissed, lashing his tail and stirring the stars sitting by his paws.

"Don't worry about ThunderClan. They'll be fine without you. When I first joined StarClan, I thought ThunderClan would be destroyed by you, but I was wrong. Turns out, I had Tigerstar to blame, and not you. Everything turned out fine in the end, didn't it?" Firestar meowed.

"Well. Maybe it did. It's just..." Ashstar trailed off, lost for words.

"Oh, Ashstar, you've still got plenty to learn. What is it? Don't you trust Squirrelstar to lead your Clan? She was a loyal cat and hasn't done anything wrong. It's been a lot of moons since Squirrelflight became leader, and she's done a good job so far, has't she?" Firestar prompted, his tail-tip twitching and his green eyes shining.

"No! I do trust her! Ir's just that... I'm worried about what Sharpkit will turn in to," He mumbled.

Firestar lifted his chin. "Don't worry. I'm sure ThunderClan will handle it if he turns into a traitor," He meowed softly.

"R-really?" Ashstar sighed. "I... guess," He mumbled.

"Ok then," Firestar mewed, padding after Bluestar. He disappeared over the grassy hill.

Ashstar sighed inwardly. *Then I'll just warn Mothstripe when she comes to the Moon Trail tonight. Seems like Firestar and Bluestar would rather let ThunderClan fall...*

Chapter 1

Sharpkit skipped away from his brother Lightkit. "Catch me, Lightkit!" He called. He skipped over the moss, yelping excitedly.

Frostkit was crouched in the corner of the nursery, her yellow eyes narrowed. "Come on, Sharpkit, Lightkit, stop playing kit-games. Why don't we do something other than chasing each other?" She hissed.

Sharpkit stopped dead in his tracks, Lightkit tumbling into his side. "Frostkit, we're still kits," He grumbled.

"Well then, grow up," Frostkit hissed, getting to her paws.

"Just ignore her," Lightkit sighed. He swished his small tail. "We can keep playing if you want," He prompted.

Frostkit turned. "Oh, I know what we could play," She mewed, lifting her chin.

"What? I was talking to Sharpkit," Lightkit challenged.

Frostkit leaped on Sharpkit, her tiny, yet sharp claws unsheathed.

"Ow! Hey!" Sharpkit hissed, trying to shove her off. He remembered a move his father had taught him the day before when he visited them. He scrambled in the moss, pushing his hind paws into Frostkit's stomach with all the energy he had.

Frostkit leaped off of him, not even effected by Sharpkit's shove. "Huh, weak kit," She grumbled. "You take up after you stupid little brother. But at least he's got more sense than you."

"Oh really?" Sharpkit challenged. She- she's wrong! Sharpkit felt anger surge through him. He unsheathed his claws, then leaped through the air. Frostkit bunched her muscles, getting ready to

dodge his attack, but Sharpkit twisted the other way, his claws slicing in a circle and hitting Frostkit's cheek.

"Ok, that's it!" Frostkit whimpered. She bunched her muscles to leap, but a white cat was rushing over to them.

"Sharpkit!" Teeth dug into his scruff. "Don't hurt your sister like that!" Snowbreeze hissed, his eyes burning with anger.

Sharpkit scrabbled away from his father's teeth. "She hurt me first!" He hissed.

"I don't want to hear it," Snowbreeze sighed. He looked from Frostkit to Sharpkit. "Go to the medicine den and get yourselves cleaned up," He grumbled. He left the den, his white tail swishing.

Sharpkit flattened his ears and leaped from the den, heading over to the nursery, Frostkit slowly following behind, her usual smirk changing to disgust. *One day, she* will *pay for what she's done*.

Sharpkit pounced on Jaywing's tail, his own tiny tail lashing in triumph. "Got it!" He mewled.

Jaywing circled happily around him, her eyes shining. "Good job!" She congratulated him. "You're fast on your feet."

"Thanks," Sharpkit mewed. "Can we go get something to eat?" He asked. He could feel his stomach rumbling.

"I know your favorite prey, so I'll get it and you find a spot to sit in," Jaywing meowed, padding away to the fresh-kill pile, her gray tabby tail swishing behind her.

Sharpkit saw a shaded spot by the apprentices' den. He knew that they were both training with their mentors. He picked his way across camp, his tail in the air, then reached his spot. He circled the ground before patting down his paws and sitting down.

Jaywing soon came over, two mice in her jaws. She smiled as she neared Sharpkit, then sat down the food before laying down beside Sharpkit and grabbing her meal in her paws. She seemed to move slowly.

Sharpkit started to bite into the side of the mouse. He spat out the fur in his mouth and bit deeper into the mouse, tasting the meat. He licked his lips as the rice flavor washed his mouth. But he noticed that Jaywing wasn't eating. Instead, she was looking off to the side, her eyes fixed on Palewhisker sharing a robin with Breezestorm. They seemed happy.

"What's wrong Jaywing?" Sharpkit asked.

"W-what? Nothing," Jaywing mumbled. She curled her tail around her paws. "I'm... worried for Palewhisker," She admitted after a moment of silence.

"Well... aren't you happy for your sister?" Sharpkit asked.

"I... I am I guess. It's just that I'm scared I'll lose another cat I love," She murmured. "I lost my mother and kit in the same battle with those dumb rogues. They've taken everything from us. I even lost my father to them. I'm scared I'll lose more of my family," She was shaking.

Sharpkit scooted closer to her, feeling her warmth on his side. "Don't worry. Your sister will be fine, I know she's a tough cat," He mewed. "Hey, why don't you eat your mouse? Maybe that will make you feel better?" He prompted.

"I've.. um got a patrol to be on," Jaywing said quickly. She got to her paws and padded away towards the camp entrance, her tail dragging in the dirt.

Sharpkit glanced at his paws.

"What's wrong Whimperkit? Did you lose a friend?" A taunting voice came from behind Sharpkit. Frostkit padded from the leaves, a paw covering her smile, her laugh muffled.

Sharpkit bristled and raced towards the camp entrance. Ivypool didn't see him. Sharpkit raced into the forest. I've got to find Jaywing! He felt like the size of an ant in this forest. Everything was bigger than him. The trees stretched so tall they seemed to be touching the clouds. Shadows covered the path ahead of Sharpkit as

he raced through the forest. His paws skidded over dirt and he tripped, rolling over the dirt and landing in a patch of bramble.

Sharpkit cried in pain and kept jumping, his fur sticking to the brambles. The sharp thorns were stained with his blood now as he rolled in the spiky trap, then he fell through a hole and rolled into a ditch, landing in dirty water. The forest seemed even scarier than it had now as Sharpkit felt dizzy. He lay in the puddle of water, letting it soak his fur. Sharpkit scrabbled to his paws as he heard growling above the ditch. He scrambled up the side, feeling dirt rub roughly against his pads and cling to his fur. He finally scrambled out, then fully regretted it.

Chapter 2

Sharpkit screeched in terror as a fox loomed over him, its jaws parted in snarl. Its lips curled back to reveal sharp fangs. Sharpkit backed up slowly as it began to slowly creep towards him. Triumph glowed in the fox's eyes as it knew that it had its prey trapped.

All of a sudden, a yowl rang out. A beautiful flame-colored she-cat leaped down from the trees, leaves in her ruffled pelt. "Get away from him!" She hissed, leaped on the fox, her green eyes shining with hate.

Sharpkit backed into a tree, wishing he could help the she-cat beat up the fox, but he was too young. The only thing he could do was watch. Blood spattered the dirt as the she-cat slashed the fox'x muzzle. The wicked creature whimpered in defeat and limped away, crashing through the undergrowth.

Sharpkit watched as the she-cat stood still, then slowly turned to meet his gaze. Her green eyes were shining and her ruffled pelt blew in the wind. The leaves rustled above, creating shadows on her pelt, then the sun broke through the tree-tops and her pelt seemed to catch on fire. "You're lucky I was here, little kit," She meowed.

Sharpkit got to his paws, panting. "T-thank you for saving me!" He stammered.

"Heh, it was no problem," The she-cat puffed.

Rustling came from the bushes. A large, muscular dark brown tom leaped from the bushes, then a pale brown she-cat with green eyes and a white paw.

"Phoenix! Are you ok? I heard fighting!" The brown tabby tom gasped.

Sharpkit glanced at them. *Phoenix? Is that her name*?

"Don't worry, Hawk, I'm fine," Phoenix meowed. "This little kit here was about to become a fox's lunch," She puffed. She turned back to Sharpkit, her green eyes glowing. "Anyways, you smell like a Clan kit. What are you doing out here?" She asked.

"I... I have the same question! Rogues aren't supposed to be on Clan territory!" Sharpkit mewled, bristling.

"I knew you were a Clan kit," Phoenix sighed. "Well what's your name then?" She asked.

"Sharpkit," Sharpkit mewed. "I came out here looking for my friend when she ran away. I couldn't find her and.... oh StarClan, I- I..." Sharpkit whimpered. "I'm so stupid!"

"Don't worry Sharpkit. You aren't stupid. You came out here looking for your friend, right? Isn't that what friends do?" Phoenix puffed.

"I'll get in trouble if I'm not back. Ivypool or Squirrelstar will probably send out a search party to look for me. My family is probably already worried about me," Sharpkit sighed.

"The only reason why we were here is because we were waiting for a patrol to pass by. We were thinking about joining ThunderClan. Hawk heard that it was the strongest and nicest Clan in this forest. Oh... where are my manners. I forgot to introduce ourselves. I'm Phoenix," Phoenix meowed. She pointed to the brown tom. "That's Hawk, my mate," She meowed. Last she pointed to the pale brown she-cat. "And that's our daughter, Echo. She's young," Phoenix meowed lastly.

"I... um could take you to my camp but I don't think they'll like the idea of rogues joining the Clan," Sharpkit meowed, looking to the side. "But maybe... well never mind I'll take you," Sharpkit meowed. He weaved around the three rouges and padded onto flat ground next to the ditch. He jumped on large tree roots and followed a

worn-down path where moons of countless paws had walked.

Sharpkit rounded a tree and walked along the path still, keeping in the shade. He heard the paw-steps of the other cats following behind him.

"Sharpkit!" A voice cried. A gray tabby she-cat sprang from the bushes. It was Jaywing!

"Jaywing!" Sharpkit mewled. "I never thought you'd come into my path," Sharpkit admitted, stopping in his tracks.

"Who are those cats," Jaywing growled. She bristled and unsheathed her claws. "Sharpkit, you know we don't allow rouges in our forest, right?" She asked.

"They saved me from a fox and they want to join our Clan!" Sharpkit mewled. "Jaywing, please, let them have a chance to join us," He whimpered.

"Fine, I can take them back to camp. Then you'll need to explain to every cat what you were doing out in the forest alone," Jaywing meowed.

"I went looking for you but... I couldn't find you and almost got eaten by a fox. But then that she-cat saved me!" Sharpkit mewled.

"Yes, you're lucky I was in that tree," Phoenix meowed. She licked her chest-fur. "I was hoping a patrol would come through so we could ask to join the Clan," She meowed.

"Ok... Sharpkit we need to get you back home," Jaywing meowed smoothly, flicking her tail. "The Clan must be worried about you."

"Sharpkit, you shouldn't of wondered off like that," Fluffypelt growled, licking his pelt softly. "You got really hurt," Fluffypelt pointed out. "You know you've always been my favorite kit and I was worried."

"Sorry mom," Sharpkit whimpered. "But the forest is scary!"

"Well you better not say that when you're an apprentice tomorrow,"

Fluffypelt joked. "I can't wait to see who your mentor will be," She admitted.

"Do you think it'll be Jaywing? Or Squirrelstar?" Sharpkit pipped.

"I think you don't need to worry about who your mentor will be. Get some rest, please," Fluffypelt meowed, licking Sharpkit's head. She padded from the medicine den, the brambles swishing behind her and her brown tail-tip disappearing.

A small wad of wet moss dropped down beside Sharpkit's nest. Then some herbs.

"Eat those," A voice meowed beside Sharpkit's ear. Flamedawn circled around his small nest. "And then you can rest."

Sharpkit pushed the herbs in his mouth and winced as the bitter taste washed his tongue. Then he swallowed them and lapped at the wet moss.

"It's to help you to not get a fever. After all, your apprentice ceremony is tomorrow and your mother and father wouldn't want you getting sick, would they?" Flamedawn meowed.

"No," Sharpkit whined.

"Now, rest," Flamedawn meowed.

Sharpkit leaned back in his nest, feeling darkness fold over his vision. He finally sunk into sleep.

Chapter 3

Fluffypelt licked Sharpkit's head and smoothed out his pelt. Her eyes were shining.

Sharpkit's paws were tingling with excitement. He glanced at his brother, Lightkit. "I can't wait to see who my mentor is! What about you?" He mewed.

"I can't either!" Lightkit squeaked, jumping up and down.

"You two sound like you need another moon in the nursery," Frostkit grumbled. Her tail was curled neatly around her paws. "Sharpkit, you do realize that that messy rogues you brought in will be in the apprentices' den with us, right?" She hissed.

"They aren't messy rogues! They saved me from getting eaten by a fox!" Sharpkit mewled. His pelt was spiked.

"Well, that's what I was saying," Frostkit murmured, swishing her tail. She flattened her ears.

"Lightkit, Sharpkit, and Frostkit, come forward!" Squirrelstar's voice echoed around the camp. The ginger she-cat's bushy tail was high in the air and her eyes sparkled.

Sharpkit glanced one last time at his mother, then bounced forward, padding beside his littermates.

"Lightkit, you shall now be known as Lightpaw up until you receive your warrior name. Your mentor will be Bramblehawk," Squirrelstar meowed, turning to Bramblehawk, she added, "Bramblehawk, I hope you pass on everything you know to your new apprentice."

The two cats touched noses.

"Sharpkit, you shall now be known as Sharppaw. Your mentor will

be Ambertuft," Squirrelstar called. "Ambertuft, pass on all you know to your apprentice."

Sharppaw eagerly touched noses with the dark ginger she-cat. Sharppaw's paws were trembling and he glanced at his brother, smiling. Lightpaw was just as excited.

"Frostkit, you shall now be known as Frostpaw. Sootwing shall be your mentor," Squirrelstar meowed.

Frostpaw touched noses with Sootwing.

"Lightpaw! Sharppaw! Frostpaw!" The Clan cheered.

Sharppaw bounced excitedly back to his mother, purring loudly. Lightpaw and Frostpaw padded over.

"I can't wait to train with my mentor!" Sharppaw purred.

"I should've received my apprentice name first," Frostpaw snorted. "Well, I might as well get to training while you three talk," She hissed. She turned away with her tail flicking.

"Wait, Frostpaw, where are you going?" Fluffypelt grumbled. She turned to Lightpaw and Sharppaw. "What's her problem?" She sighed. She turned away, padding after Frostpaw.

Ambertuft and Bramblehawk padded over. "Well, are you ready to for training, Sharppaw?" Ambertuft asked.

Sharppaw turned to his mentor, looking into her amber eyes. "Ready? I'm more than ready to start training!" He mewled.

"Ok, we'll start first with... Picking tics off the elders!" Ambertuft purred.

Sharppaw's shoulders drooped. His tail lashed.

"Lightpaw, you can help him," Bramblehawk meowed, flicking his tail.

Lightpaw flattened his ears and grumbled. "What? But I thought

we'd explore the territory-"

"Well, maybe tomorrow," Ambertuft meowed. She turned to Bramblehawk, amusement in her eyes.

"Hey! I'm taking Frostpaw out of camp to explore!" Sootwing called. She was already at the camp entrance, her tail flicking.

Sharppaw blinked and flattened his ears. He narrowed his eyes at his sister, already mad. Lucky apprentice!

"Well, Sharppaw, Lightpaw, get to it. What are you waiting for?" Ambertuft meowed. She flicked her tail. "You should go to the medicine den to get mouse bile for the tics," She added before turning away.

Bramblehawk glanced last at Lightpaw before turning away with Ambertuft and heading for the fresh-kill pile.

It had been two days since his apprenticeship and Sharppaw padded over to the apprentices' den, feeling tired from exploring the forest with his mentor. It was pretty exciting seeing how big the territory actually was. His brother was following closely behind him. Monarchpaw was over at the elders' den. Moss was in her jaws. She then disappeared as she slid into the den.

Lightpaw began to purr behind Sharppaw. "Wait, Monarchpaw!" He called, running over to the elders' den.

Sharppaw sighed inwardly. He continued to pad to the medicine den, but before he reached it, he saw Stormpaw. The beautiful gray tabby she-cat had received her apprentice name just yesterday like the rest of her littermates.

"Hi, Stormpaw," Sharppaw purred.

Stormpaw turned to him, purring as well. Her green eyes shone. "Hi Sharppaw!" She meowed.

"What are you doing at the medicine cats' den?" Sharppaw asked, his tail flicking.

"Well while exploring the territory with Berrynose, I got a thorn in my paw," Stormpaw explained.

"Are you ok?" Sharppaw asked, worried.

"I'm fine, besides my paw hurting," Stormpaw purred.

"Good, I was worrying for a second," Sharppaw sighed.

"Worrying? Oh Sharppaw..." Stormpaw mumbled, purring.

"Hey, Stormpaw, need anything?" Mothstripe's face appeared in the entrance of the den, her eyes dull.

"Yes, actually. I got a thorn in my paw," Stormpaw meowed. She padded into the den and sat down in a nest.

Mothstripe glanced at Sharppaw, sadness clouding her eyes. "Sharppaw... would you do me a favor?" She asked.

"Uh, sure," Sharppaw mewed.

Mothstripe seemed to be looking past him, glancing at the fresh-kill pile. "Jaywing has been kind of down lately. Think you could cheer her up?" She asked.

"I think I can!" Sharppaw purred. "Bye, Stormpaw," He called as he turned away from the den. The scent of rain was sharp on Sharppaw's tongue as he glanced up at the sky. Dark gray clouds moved quickly across the orange sky, and the sun the sinking.

"Hi, Jaywing," Sharppaw called as he neared his friend.

Jaywing's eyes were dull, but brightened when she saw Sharppaw. "Hello, Sharppaw," She rasped. "Is everything ok?"

"Yes, I just wanted to talk," Sharppaw mewed. He gazed into her blue eyes and lay close to her, feeling the warmth drift from her pelt.

"So... how's your apprenticeship going?" Jaywing asked.

"Fine. Exploring the territory was amazing!" Sharppaw purred. His eyes rested on the shrew that lay at Jaywing's paws. "Can I have the rest?" He asked, hearing his belly grumble.

"Sure," Jaywing meowed, pushing the shrew towards him with her paw.

Sharppaw crouched down to eat the remains of the shrew. After gulping it all down, he licked his lips, purring.

"I remember when I was an apprentice exploring the territory for the first time," Jaywing meowed. She curled her tail around her. "Well...." Her voice trailed off. "I went beyond Clan territory."

"Really? Was it fun?" Sharppaw gasped.

"Well not as fun as you think. Being an apprentice was harsh for me. My father was being controlled by Tigerstar and I didn't know. We sort of had a fight and Honeyfern was killed my Ashstar right in front of me. And he told us that to become a warrior, we'd need to go and find the old forest. When I was an apprentice, we still had the Lake Territories."

Sharppaw looked to the side, unsure what to say. He saw Lightpaw padded over with Monarchpaw.

"Hi Sharppaw," Lightpaw greeted.

"Hey," Sharppaw meowed.

Lightpaw picked a mouse from the fresh-kill pile and sat down with Monarchpaw. The two ate happily together.

"I think I'm going to rest," Sharppaw meowed.

Jaywing didn't look at him, then stood up. "I'll see if I can join a patrol," She sighed before padding away.

Sharppaw got to his paws and headed over to the apprentices' den, seeing Frostpaw curled up in her nest already. Dewpaw and Cloudpaw were curled up in their nests as well. Sharppaw picked his way to the back of the den and circled in the dark, patting his

nest, then curled up for sleep.

Chapter 4

"Great job, Sharppaw!"

Ambertuft's praise echoed in Sharppaw's head. He dropped his catch on the ground. "I can't believe I caught this slippery thing!" He purred, glancing down at his mouse.

"Don't worry, It'll get easier to hunt once you get the hang of it," Ambertuft meowed. She flicked her tail. "Now, why don't we try to catch a bird?"

Sharppaw parted his jaws to taste the air. He could scent many prey scents. "I don't smell any bird-scents here," He meowed.

"Ok, then lets see if we can find some up ahead," Ambertuft meowed. She turned away from him, heading into the bracken.

The forest floor seemed to be glowing golden. Shadows cut into Sharppaw's path and the trees thinned out to reveal a clearing. The was the place where apprentices' usually trained for battle. Now, parting his jaws, he tasted robin. Turning, he could see a plump bird pecking at roots near the base of a tree about tree tail-lengths away.

"Look," Ambertuft's whisper was barely a breath. Sharppaw's mentor crouched down, the Leaf-Fall breeze ruffling her ginger fur.

Sharppaw crouched down, keeping his tail low off the ground. He kept a close eye on the bird and checked to make sure his scent wasn't carried towards the bird.

Sharppaw crept forward, then leaped, claws extended. The bird turned and tried to fly, but Sharppaw's claws hooked the bird's

wings. He quickly lunged forward and nipped its neck, killing it. Sharppaw turned to his mentor, who had a happy look on her face. Sharppaw picked up his bird and padded up to Ambertuft.

"Great job, Sharppaw," She meowed, her green eyes shining.

Sharppaw purred, his tail-tip flicking.

"Lets head back to camp. I think your mother would be proud of your catch," Ambertuft meowed.

After Sharppaw had put his mouse and robin on the pile, he grabbed two voles from the pile. Clutching them in his jaws, he headed to the elders' den.

"Hello Sharppaw," Stormpaw's voice purred beside his ear.

Sharppaw jumped. "You scared me!" He hissed. He then purred. "Hi Stormpaw," He greeted.

"I heard that you caught a robin! Was it hard?" Stormpaw asked, her tail-tip flicking.

"Well, it was actually easy," Sharppaw meowed, glancing to the side. "I was going to take these two voles to the elders. Do you think they need moss?" He added.

"They might need moss, otherwise they'll be grumbling like a nest of badgers!" Stormpaw purred, her green eyes shining. "I'll see if I can go get some," She meowed. She turned away, her long, fluffy gray tail in the air.

Sharppaw could already spot Cloudpaw and Dewpaw at the elders' den. They seemed to be listening to a story from Flower. She was an old cat that once lived with the Tribe but when the Tribe Cats left, she decided to stay here.

"Hi Sharppaw," Graystripe greeted. "Are those two voles for me?" He purred.

"Well, one is. You care share it with whoever you like!" Sharppaw mewed. He placed the vole in front of Graystripe. Graystripe

crouched to eat it. Sharppaw turned and looked around the den, seeing that Poppyfrost and Ferncloud were asleep. He padded over to Flower.

"-so, that's how I became blind," Flower finished her story. Sharppaw had no idea what it was about, but he wasn't too interested. "Here we are," He meowed, setting the vole at Flower's paws.

"You're a nice young tom," Flower meowed suddenly, turning to Sharppaw. "Can I talk to you in private for a second, Lightpaw?" She asked.

"Er, I'm Sharppaw, by the way," Sharppaw corrected, his pelt feeling hot with embarrassment.

"Oh, sorry. I couldn't see that you were Sharppaw," Flower sighed. She turned to Dewpaw and Cloudpaw. "Could you two leave for a second?" She asked kindly.

"Sure," Cloudpaw and Dewpaw turned away, heading for the fresh-kill pile.

Sharppaw watched them go, then snapped his attention back to Flower. The old cat had her tail wrapped around her paws and she was sitting up. She then crouched down to take a bite from the vole. Sharppaw could see her ribs showing beneath her pelt.

"So, Sharppaw. How is training going?" Flower asked, not looking at him.

"Er well, its great," Sharppaw mewed awkwardly. It felt strange that Flower had only wanted to talk to him. "Um, how are your days as an elder?"

"Well, huh, boring and fun. I can't see anything, but at least I haven't lost my hearing or sense of smell," She purred, flicking her tail. She took another bite of vole, then scooted Sharppaw closer. "Tell you what. Are you happy living here? In a Clan?" She asking.

"Well, its great! I was born a Clan cat!" Sharppaw purred. He didn't want to mention how his sister treated him though. "I caught a

robin without any trouble at all!"

"That's good! I remember when I was a to-be and..." Flower's voice trailed off. Her eyes clouded with sadness.

"What's wrong?" Sharppaw asked.

"I tried catching an eagle once. I'll admit I was stupid to do it. My... mentor died saving me. He sacrificed himself to save me from the eagle. I've always hated myself for doing that. I'll always blame myself," Flower admitted, grief choking her.

"I'm sorry that that happened," Sharppaw mewed. "It must've been hard," He meowed, looking away from Flower's scratched-up eyes.

"I remember when my son became leader. Stoneteller. I grew older and older, watching as time went on. He got older too, although he was a young tom. Life became harder in the mountains. I lost my sister and my mother got sick and died, shortly after my father went missing. Then, the rogues attacked and I lost my daughter, Wolf. Then I lost my son, Stoneteller. He was too young when he died. He didn't deserve to," Flower meowed.

"I'm sorry you had to go through that," Sharppaw meowed sympathetically. "I would be devastated if I lost my family members," He meowed. *Except for Frostpaw*.

"But tell you what, I'm actually happier living here than with the Tribe. I lost most of my kin there. The closet cat to me in that Tribe that's still alive is Ice. He was a good friend of my son. A great friend. He was even chosen deputy. I know Ice was devastated as well when Stoneteller died. He even.... he even witnessed it with his own eyes," Flower meowed. "But I'm happier here. I've made tons of friends in ThunderClan. And living as an elder, everyone treats me with respect."

"Sounds like you should rest," Sharppaw meowed softly. "I think you just need a break." Paws sounded behind him.

"I know the rogues are still a problem here. And they'll become an ever bigger problem," Flower muttered, crouching into her nest.

"I've got fresh moss!"

Sharppaw turned to see Stormpaw. She was running up to them with a big bundle of moss in her jaws. She dropped some of it at Sharppaw's paws. "Come on, help me fix their nests," Stormpaw purred.

Sharppaw crouched to pick up the moss, then began to go into the back of the den, clawing up Graystripe's old nest. Wasn't Frostpaw supposed to be cleaning their nests? Sharppaw felt a growl rising in his throat and tore up Ferncloud's old nest, then set down new moss. He spread out the pieces of moss, fixing them until they looked comfy.

Sharppaw sighed as he padded from the den, feeling tired. He made his way to the apprentices' den, seeing that Stormpaw and Monarchpaw were curled up together. Stalkpaw was sleeping alone in his nest on the side, while Frostpaw slept in a nest beside Lightpaw's nest, her lips curled back. Sharppaw hissed inwardly and picked his way to the back of the cozy den, then crouched down in his nest, bristling. Facing the back wall of the den, he curled up and fell asleep.

Chapter 5

Sharppaw woke up in a dark, foggy place. He felt scared not knowing what this place actually was. Mist twisted around gray trees and glowing mushrooms stuck up from the dying earth.

Sharppaw reluctantly padded forward, but felt as if this place was calling his name. He could've sworn that he heard whispering all around him. It was so quiet here. Half of him liked it, half didn't.

"Welcome to the Dark Forest, Sharppaw," A voice meowed up ahead. A large black tom padded from the dark fog, his chin high. He had black eyes with dark blue slits that glowed like fire. His claws were unsheathed and shining.

Sharppaw crouched to the ground. "W-who are you?" He hissed, flattening his ears.

"I'm Crowstar. I was leader of the rogues until I died," The tom hissed, tail lashing.

"The leader of the rogues?" Sharppaw gasped, pelt pricking in fear. He stared in shock at the tom, unsheathing his claws and curling them into the grass.

"We've been watching you, Sharppaw. You hate your father and sister, right? For the way that they treat you? Well imagine if we could train you here," Crowstar smirked. A sick look crossed his face. "Don't you like the idea of training to be a *real* warrior?"

"As much as I'd love to train here, I don't want to get in trouble with my mother. She would pluck out my whiskers if she knew I trained with the leader of the rogues!" Sharppaw hissed.

"Hmm? But would she really? Don't you think she'd be proud of you

training here? You get to learn all kinds of good battle moves," Crowstar meowed. "Some that-"

"No, I.. I can't," Sharppaw interrupted. He then noticed scratches along the tom's throat. Blood oozed from them. Sharppaw tried to turn away, but the tom leaped and pinned him to the ground, claws hooking into Sharppaw's shoulders. Sharppaw whimpered in pain.

"StarClan destined you to train with us. I promise that if you train with us, you'll be the best warrior of all Clans," Crowstar hissed.

Sharppaw glanced at him. He bit down hard on Crowstar's foreleg and heard the tom hiss with pain and annoyance. Then Sharppaw took the energy to shove back the large tom. He slithered out from under him and backed away, allowing the tom to get to his paws. "Then lets have a fight for practice," He growled.

"Very well, apprentice," Crowstar growled. He crouched and bunched his muscles to leap.

Sharppaw crouched as well, ready. "I'm ready for your first attack!" He hissed.

"Heh, but you aren't ready for this," Crowstar hissed. He leaped forward, then twisted in the air and landed beside Sharppaw, dealing a rough blow to his shoulder. Claws tugged out a clump of fur.

"Hey! Why are you using claws?" Sharppaw hissed.

"That's just what we do here!" Crowstar hissed. He leaped over Sharppaw as the young tom was about to slash at his shoulders. "This is why you're here. To train. You obviously need training!" He growled.

Sharppaw turned on the tom, wanting to fight like a rogue, but he didn't want to. "I haven't been taught any moves!" He hissed. He ducked as Crowstar's paw swiped at his ear, but he didn't expect Crowstar's other paw to lash out and make him trip on the ground.

Crowstar leaped on Sharppaw, his claws digging into his shoulders and flanks. Sharppaw tried to twist and lash out at Crowstar, but

teeth clamped his scruff and he screamed as he was hauled into the air. He felt the breath driven out of him as he landed at the base of a trunk. Fog swamped around him and he shivered, wondering where Crowstar was. Fear sunk into the pit of his stomach. Besides the quiet, he could hear his breathing and own heart pounding.

A black figure leaped from the shadows and Crowstar grabbed Sharppaw's scruff once more, dragging him away from the tree and twisting him over. "Did you really think I was finished with you? You little-"

"Crowstar! That's enough!" A tom's voice hissed. Another black tom with blue eyes padded over to them. He was only slightly bigger than Sharppaw. "I hope you weren't going to injure him to bad."

"Oh, I wasn't," Crowstar laughed.

Sharppaw felt embarrassed. *I have to win next time*! "I promise I can do better," He whimpered.

"You will once we start training," Crowstar pointed out. "You'll learn a new move tomorrow." The black tom began padding away deeper into the fog, leaving Sharppaw alone.

Bloody and battered, Sharppaw staggered as he tried to follow the rogue. He then collapsed on the ground, panting hard. He felt like claws were tugging him back. His vision began to turn black and he heard the faint, faded calling of a cat calling his name.

"Sharppaw! Wake up, please!"

Sharppaw scrambled awake in his nest. He felt burning scratches all over his pelt. Blood stained his nest.

"Sharppaw!" Stormpaw gasped. "You're hurt!"

Sharppaw got to his paws but almost slipped in his blood. His shoulder was hurt badly. Stormpaw pressed against him. "Come on, we're going to the medicine den," She hissed. She led him out of the den, stepping over the other cat's nests.

Lightpaw came from the medicine den, dripping moss in his jaws.

His eyes widened as he saw Sharppaw. "Sharppaw! What happened?" He gasped, dropping the moss.

"I'm not sure what happened to him. I woke up because I heard him moving around a lot in his nest. Then I saw that he was injured!" Stormpaw gasped.

"What's all the yowling about?" Mothstripe came from the den, ears pricked. "Sharppaw? What happened to you?" She asked.

Sharppaw grumbled and staggered through the medicine den, Stormpaw supporting his shoulder. His friend allowed him to lay down more easily.

"Stormpaw, I know you're worried for your friend, but go help Lightpaw with the elders' den. I need room to treat Sharppaw," Mothstripe meowed.

A shape moved in a nest at the far end of the den. The flame-colored pelt of Flamedawn was visible in the dim light. The medicine cat turned around yawned. "What happened to Sharppaw?" He asked, padding over. His white paws were dusty.

"That's what I'm trying to figure out," Mothstripe sighed. "It looks as if these wounds were caused by a cat," She meowed. Her gaze looked thoughtful, then terror swamped her gaze as though she knew.

"Don't worry about my wounds," Sharppaw begged. "I go out to train every night," He lied.

"Did you scratch yourself on thorns?" Mothstripe sighed.

"Well maybe I did," Sharppaw meowed. He felt Mothstripe working herb juice into his wounds. They burned even more.

"Flamedawn, give me some cobwebs," Mothstripe meowed.

"Alright," The ginger tom grabbed a wad of cobwebs and set them at Mothstripe's paws.

Mothstripe applied the cobwebs to Sharppaw's wounds.

"Hey, Whimperpaw! I heard you got beaten up by a thorn bush! Now look how tough you are!" A mocking voice called through the den entrance.

Sharppaw was shaking with rage as he heard his sister's imitating voice. He felt his claws curl into the moss, pretending the moss was Frostpaw's pelt.

"Sit still!" Mothstripe hissed. "Just ignore her. She'll get bored of teasing eventually," Mothstripe murmured. "Get some rest," She meowed. She turned to Flamedawn. "Stay here and keep an eye on him. I'll go see if I can find Twistedfoot," Mothstripe meowed, disappearing through the den entrance.

Sharppaw curled up in his nest. Could he attack Frostpaw now that Mothstripe was gone? He decided not to. *I'll just get some sleep*.

Chapter 6

The air was humid and smelled of dew. The sun hung in the sky, shining dimly. The ground underpaw felt hard and frosty and a cold breeze lifted the leaves off the ground. The trees were bare and touched the gray sky. Leaf-bare was taking its turn on the Clans.

Sharppaw was in a small patrol with his mentor, Ambertuft. The other cats in the patrol were Ripplewind and his apprentice, Hawkpaw. It had been a moon since Sharppaw had started training in the Dark Forest with Crowstar. He'd actually learned a new move.

"Alright this is a good spot," Ambertuft meowed suddenly. She stopped in her tracks. "Sharppaw we'll stop here and train," Ambertuft meowed.

"Why don't we do a practice battle with Sharppaw and Hawkpaw?" Ripplewind asked.

"Alright, lets see what you can do Sharppaw," Ambertuft meowed.

Sharppaw looked at Hawkpaw. The brown tabby tom was bigger than him, but Sharppaw was sure he could still beat him. Unsheathing his claws, Sharppaw began to circle his opponent.

"Sharppaw, this is a practice battle. Keep your claws sheathed!" Ambertuft hissed.

"Ok, sorry, I thought...." Sharppaw trailed off. Shaking his thoughts clear, he sheathed his claws and circled Hawkpaw. His gaze locked on Hawkpaw's right shoulder, then he leaped to the opposite side as Hawkpaw jumped away. He then swiped at Hawkpaw's shoulder. Surprise lit the tom's gaze, then he swiped at Sharppaw's ears.

Sharppaw ducked and reared, avoiding Hawkpaw's blows. He then slammed into Hawkpaw's chest, making the tom stagger and fall on the ground. Before he could regain his balance, Sharppaw pinned him down and stared into his eyes. "Surrender?" He asked. All of a sudden, strong paws slammed into his belly.

Sharppaw gasped as he flew backward and hit the ground. Panting, he rolled to the side as Hawkpaw tried to leap on him.

"Stop!" Ambertuft called. She flicked her tail.

Sharppaw and Hawkpaw got to their paws, panting.

"You did well, Sharppaw," Ambertuft praised, her eyes shining.

"You did well, too, Hawkpaw," Ripplewind meowed.

Sharppaw glanced at Ambertuft. "Can we go hunting?" He asked.

"Yes," Ambertuft meowed. "Let's see if you can catch a bird," She suggested.

Sharppaw kneaded the ground excitedly. He glanced at Ripplewind. The cream tom was talking with Ambertuft. Then the tom touched his muzzle to hers and he headed off in the direction of camp with his apprentice.

Sharppaw turned towards his mentor. "Where did they go?"

"Back to camp. Hawkpaw and Phoenixpaw are getting their full names. They were only training for a little bit," Ambertuft meowed. She lifted her tail. "Come on."

Sharppaw followed his mentor through the woods. He could hear birds singing and thought about catching one. He couldn't wait to catch a bird and bring it back to camp and hear his mother and father praise him. Maybe his sister would start respecting him for once.

"Look! A sparrow!" Ambertuft rasped. She blinked warmly at Sharppaw. "Why don't you go and catch it?"

Sharppaw crept forward, keeping his tail off the ground and curling it at his side. He flattened his ears so they wouldn't brush anything above him. Slowly creeping forward, Sharppaw readied himself to pounce. The sparrow was just pecking at the ground, unknown to his presence. Sharppaw then leaped. His claws caught the bird on the tip of its wing as it tried to fly.

Sharppaw brought down the sparrow and clamped his jaws around its neck, feeling it fall limp in his jaws. *Fluffypelt will be so proud!*

Ambertuft padded up to her apprentice, her eyes warm. "Good catch! Let's head back to camp now," She meowed.

"Wow! You caught that all by yourself?" Stormpaw gasped as she saw the sparrow.

"Yes." Sharppaw put his catch on the fresh-kill pile. He saw that Stormpaw looked a bit dirty. "What have you been doing?"

"Hunting for moss to clean the nests," Stormpaw murmured. She lifted her tail. "But Hawkpaw and Phoenixpaw got their warrior names, and it was exciting to watch!"

"What are their names now?" Sharppaw asked, hooking a mouse from the pile.

"Hawkfoot and Phoenixwing," Stormpaw meowed. She glanced at the mouse that Sharppaw had at his paws. "Are we going to share?" She asked.

"Yes. I wanted the two of us to take a walk together after this," Sharppaw meowed, lifting his tail.

After eating the mouse together, Sharppaw and Stormpaw headed towards the camp entrance. Snowbreeze was guarding it.

"Snowbreeze!" Sharppaw greeted his father warmly. "Did you see my first bir-"

"Yeah.... nice bird," Snowbreeze growled. His lashed his tail.

"Is something wrong?" Sharppaw asked, his tail drooping. His heart

pounded. Surely his father cared about his learning and skills?

"There's nothing wrong with me!" Snowbreeze hissed. He blinked at his son, his eyes narrowing. "Where are you going anyway?" He asked.

Sharppaw ignored his question. "Don't you care about me?" He growled, his heart breaking. Sharppaw bristled.

Snowbreeze ignored his question. He showed his teeth. "I can't seem to take care of you anyway. All you do is hurt and bully your sister. Be nicer to her and I might consider you my son," He growled, avoiding Sharppaw's gaze.

"I've been nice to her! *She's* the one who's bullying *me*!" Sharppaw hissed, unsheathing his claws. He leaped up and slashed quickly at his father's muzzle. He felt fur and flesh rip beneath his claws. Sharppaw dropped to the ground, bunching his muscles to attack again.

Jaywing, Bramblehawk, Hawkfoot, Phoenixwing, Falconflight, and Ambertuft crowded around, bristling.

"Sharppaw!" Ambertuft gasped, her gaze wide.

Sharppaw froze, his heart quickening. He then turned and scrambled from the camp. He kept running, skipping around brambles and bracken and dodging trees. He leaped over a ditch and saw a nettle patch ahead. He ran faster and leaped. He cleared the nettle patch but didn't see the large ditch sloping down. He landed roughly in the mud and rolled down the side, then hit the bottom of the ditch, huffing with pain.

Sharppaw weakly lifted his head, his vision blackening. Then he was swallowed by shadows.

Chapter 7

Sharppaw awoke to the sound of a cat calling his name. He blinked open his eyes, which were clouded.

"Sharppaw?!"

Sharppaw could see clearly now. The gray tabby figure of Stormpaw loomed over him. He glanced at the she-cat. Sharppaw got to his paws and shook the mud from his pelt. Stormpaw flinched as dirt sprayed her.

"Come on! We need to get out of here. I dragged you from the ditch and to a tree hollow," Stormpaw exlained. Her beautiful green eyes were locked onto Sharppaw. "I heard voices close by. It must be a patrol that came to find us," She added.

"Are you sure?" Sharppaw rasped. His heart still ached because of Snowbreeze. *Well, if he doesn't want to be my father, then I'll show him.* Sharppaw tasted the air. It smelled like a strange scent, like rogue. He bristled. Sharppaw pulled Stormpaw into the hollow with him and pushed her against the wall. "Be quiet. Roges."

Stormpaw bristled and Sharppaw could smell fear scent coming from her. He pricked his ears forward as he heard leaves crunching and voices.

Two rogues appeared outside the hollow. One of the rogues was a dark gray tom that had emerald-green eyes and a silver muzzle and chest. The second rogue was a dark ginger she-cat with amber eyes, gray splotches, and white paws. They were a few paw-lengths within the border, their eyes looking around.

"I think this is Clan territory. Petal said it had a strong scent," the ginger she-cat mewed, her tail flicking. She looked at the dark gray

tom, who was slightly larger than her. "Do you really believe that we'll find Wolffang here?" She asked, her gaze flashing with worry.

"If we find him here, we can go back to Petal and tell her. If we don't find our father here, we can keep looking," The dark gray tom meowed. "Come on."

Sharppaw growled. Those rogues were going to invade the camp! *If I catch them and bring them to camp, Snowbreeze will be proud!* Sharppaw yowled loudly and darted from the hollow. He bristled and lifted his tail, unsheathing his claws and snarling. "Get out of ThunderClan territory, you filthy rogues!" He hissed.

The dark gray tom was bigger than Sharppaw. "ThunderClan?" He echoed. His voice sounded calm. "We were wondering-"

Sharppaw leaped on the tom and latched onto his back.

Stormpaw pushed out of the hollow. "Sharppaw! Stop!" She yowled.

Sharppaw was shook off of the dark gray tom. He landed on the ground beside Stormpaw, panting. He pushed himself to his paws and glanced at his friend. "Why? They're going to invade camp!"

"Let's hear what they have to say first," Stormpaw meowed, a faint growl in her voice. She blinked warmly at the rogues and lifted her tail. "Who are you?"

The dark gray tom blinked warmly at her. "My name is Mistfang, and this is my sister, Cherryflight," He meowed, pointing to the ginger she-cat.

"Hi," Cherryflight meowed, glancing at Stormpaw.

Sharppaw sat down, licking his dusty chest fur. "I'm sorry for attacking you. You sound like Clan cats. I mistaked you for rogues," He murmured.

Mistfang lifted his tail and padded closer to Sharppaw. "It's ok, we all make mistakes. But we are not Clan cats, we are rogues. We were sent by our mother to find our father. Our mother, Petal, told us that we would probably find him here. Do you know Wolffang?"

He asked.

Sharppaw froze. He'd heard of Wolffang. He was Ashstar's son. Even though Wolffang had been Jaywing's brother, she had never talked much about him. "Wolffang was not around when I was born. But my kin told me that he left ThunderClan as an apprentice. I heard that he was very rude and evil. But he never returned to ThunderClan. In fact, nobody knows where he is. I didn't even know that he had kits," Sharppaw explained.

Mistfang and Cherryflight exchanged glances. Their eyes were cloudy. "He's not dead, is he?" Mistfang stammered.

"I don't know. But his father and mother are both dead, along with his sister, Softpaw, who he killed, and his brothers, Bunnypelt and Stoneheart are both dead. Jaywing, Palewhisker, Moonshine, and Smallfeather are his siblings. But I'm part of his kin," Sharppaw meowed.

"That's terrible. Could you perhaps take us to ThunderClan? Maybe we could speak to this Jaywing?" Cherryflight suggested.

Sharppaw glanced at Stormpaw. "Well, come with us back to camp," Sharppaw meowed. Stormpaw padded at his side as Cherryflight and Mistfang followed him through the forest.

Getting nearer to the camp, Sharppaw heard yowls. He glanced at Stormpaw. "Something's wrong!" He growled. He raced forward and burst through the camp entrance, smelling rogue scent. He spotted Darktail fighting with Jaywing and then realized that all the rogues were here.

Sharppaw glanced at Stormpaw. "Stay here with Mistfang and Cherryflight."

"No! I'm coming with you!" Stormpaw gasped, glancing at him.

"We'll help," Mistfang and Cherryflight meowed, pushing closer.

Sharppaw glanced at them. Blood pounded in his ears. "Let's go!" He growled. He raced across the clearing, Stormpaw on his heels. He leaped on Darktail, who had Jaywing pinned down. "Get off her!"

He yowled, slashing at Darktail's ears.

Darktail quickly shook Sharppaw off and turned around, leaping on him instead. He lifted a paw, claws extended.

"Sharppaw!" Stormpaw gasped. She leaped on Darktail, slashing her claws against his side. White fur tore from Darktail's flank and he snapped around, kicking Sharppaw back and throwing Stormpaw to the ground. She gasped in horror.

Sharppaw tried to get up, but his shoulder was loose and he staggered, gasping with pain. *No! Stormpaw is going to die! StarClan help me!* Suddenly a dark figure appeared in front of him. It was a dark gray tom with black eyes with amber slits. There was a bloody gash in his throat. "Don't fail me, Sharppaw. Don't fail *us*. Get up," he encouraged. The dark figure suddenly dissappeared, and Sharppaw felt energy surge through him.

Sharppaw yowled and pushed himself to his paws, his claws extended. He ignored the pain in his shoulder and raced towards Darktail. His paw was raised to kill Stormpaw. Sharppaw knocked the white tom to the ground and swung his paw around. His claws split the wind and he slashed Darktail's belly. Fur tore in clumps and caught in Sharppaw's claws. Blood stained his paw and the rogue leader's white belly fur.

Darktail shoved Sharppaw off, glaring at the apprentice. Jaywing raced up, bristling. Darktail growled and backed up. "DarkClan! Retreat!" He yowled.

Stormpaw pushed herself to her paws, panting. Her tail flicked back and forth.

"Are you ok?" Sharppaw asked worriedly. He looked into her eyes, but they were dull.

Suddenly, a yowl sounded across the clearing. Sharppaw spotted Snowbreeze pinning Mistfang to the ground. He raced over to the two toms, his heart racing. "Snowbreeze! No!" He yowled.

Snowbreeze looked up, his eyes wild. He glared at Sharppaw.

"Traitor!" He hissed, his ears flat. "I should've known you would rather side with the rogues!" He growled, his tail lashing. He looked down at Mistfang.

"Mistfang isn't one of them! He's good!" Sharppaw defended, lashing his tail. He dug his claws into the ground. Why did his father want to argue with him all the time?

Snowbreeze backed off Mistfang, letting the gray tom rise to his paws. Mistfang shook out his dusty pelt and stared gratefully at Sharppaw. Snowbreeze glared at Sharppaw, his teeth bared.

"It's obvious you're siding with the rogues. Right when you attacked me and left, the rogues invaded shortly after," Snowbreeze snarled. He stared around his Clanmates.

Berrynose bristled. "I agree. After all, what does he do in the middle of the night to get all those scratches? Train with the rogues?" He hissed.

Sharppaw suddenly felt small. He thought his Clanmates liked him. But instead they were accusing him of siding with a bunch of dumb rogues. *What did I even do to make them hate me?*

Falconflight, who had a bloody scratch on his muzzle, padded forward, Frostpaw at his side. Sharppaw noticed that she had a bloody scratch on her cheek. "He probably told the rogues about all us. He told them secrets about our Clan." Falconflight then bent down to lick Frostpaw's head gently. "Sharppaw even hurt his own *sister*." The brown tom glared accusingly at Sharppaw.

Sharppaw blinked at the warrior, confused. "That's not true!" He gasped.

"Don't lie to us, Sharppaw. We all know that you're with the rogues. It's clear. You'll even lie about hurting your own sister!" Snowbreeze yowled, his eyes blazing.

Stormpaw limped up to Sharppaw's side, bristling. "That's not true! Sharppaw is loyal to his Clan and he'd never betray his Clanmates! You should've seen him in the battle!" Stormpaw hissed, her eyes

blazing. She glared at Snowbreeze with disgust. "What kind of father are you?"

Snowbreeze curled his lip. "Of course words like that would come from *you*. I should've known you'd stand up for this traitor. After all, you aren't even Clanborn," He growled.

Stormpaw flinched as though claws had raked her face. She looked at her paws, her eyes dull. She was panting roughly, as though the battle had made her exhausted. Sharppaw felt anger we though him.

"You don't even act like you're Clanborn at this point!" Sharppaw yowled. He dug his claws into the ground. "You're a bad father! You don't even deserve to be called a father, actually!" Sharppaw growled. He flattened his ears.

Snowbreeze bristled. "And you don't even deserve to be called my son." The white tom flashed one last glare at Sharppaw. He turned and padded from the camp entrance.

Sharppaw was left sitting beside Stormpaw, with his Clanmates staring at him. Their gazes were burning his pelt like fire.

Lightpaw padded up to Sharppaw, his eyes misty. "I'm sorry this happened. But you're not a traitor to me, you're my brother," he meowed, smiling. Lightpaw pressed against Sharppaw's side. Sharppaw couldn't force a purr. The argue with his father had caused him to have anxiety. *Will I be exiled from my Clan?*

Chapter 8

It had been a moon since the fight with the rogues. Dewpaw had died shortly after from wounds, and Cloudpaw had earned her warrior name, Cloudspark, for fighting bravely in the battle. Squirrelstar had allowed Mistfang and Cherryflight to join the Clan, along with their mother, who was named Petal. She'd decided to keep her name though.

Sharppaw was on a patrol with his mentor, Ambertuft, and with Cloudspark, Firestorm, and Smallfeather. He was happy since they were all going to ShadowClan to warn them about the rogues. Another patrol was going to RiverClan, and then another going to WindClan.

"Be on the watch for a ShadowClan patrol," Ambertuft murmured as they neared the ShadowClan border.

Sharppaw pricked his ears. He was thinking about the rogues. They had taken everything from them. The happy young apprentice, Dewpaw, and before that, ThunderClan's leader, Ashstar. What would they take next?

ShadowClan scent rolled on Sharppaw's tongue. A patrol consisting of a black tom, a gray tabby she-cat, and a dark gray tom padded from the shade of the pines. They bristled when they saw the patrol.

"Intruders!" The black tom hissed, his tail lashing.

The gray tabby she-cat padded forward, her eyes narrowed. "Relax, Juniperclaw, they're probably here for a reason."

"ThunderClan's always here for a reason," the dark gray tom sniffed, flattening his ears.

"Smokefoot agrees with me, at least," Juniperclaw meowed.

"Greetings Cloverfoot, Juniperclaw, and Smokefoot. We need to speak with your leader," Ambertuft meowed. She glanced at Juniperclaw. "Weren't you with the rogues?" She asked, her eyes narrowing.

Cloudspark bristled. She flexed her claws. Sharppaw knew what she was thinking. "Murderer!" She yowled, her teeth bared.

"Cloudpaw, is it?" Juniperclaw sighed, glancing at the white she-cat. "And yes, I was with the rogues. But I left. I thought it was wrong."

"I'm Cloud*spark* now. The rogues killed my brother in a battle," Cloudspark murmured, her gaze dropping.

"Well, ThunderClan cats, what do you need to say to our leader?" Juniperclaw asked, his tail flicking.

"Juniperclaw, I'm the leader of this patrol. If they need to speak to Tigerstar, then they shall come," Cloverfoot meowed, glancing at Juniperclaw. She flicked her tail at the patrol. "Come."

Sharppaw padded into the ShadowClan camp. He felt the burning stares of the cats as the ThunderClan patrol walked in. Ambertuft glanced around, Firestorm at her side. Cloudspark was beside Sharppaw. She was looking around anxiously.

"It's ok. They won't hurt us," Sharppaw murmured.

The she-cat glanced at him. "I know, I'm just..."

Her voice trailed off as a large brown tabby tom padded from a shadowy cleft in a rock. His chin was high, his tail lifted, and his amber eyes shone. A tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes was by his side, her gaze resting on Ambertuft.

"Greetings, Tigerstar, Tawnypelt," Ambertuft greeted.

"Ah, ThunderClan," Tigerstar greeted. "Why have you come?" He sat down, curling his tail around his paws. Tawnypelt stopped beside him, sitting down.

"It's the rogues. They're becoming more of a problem," Ambertuft meowed. She closed her eyes, curling her tail around her paws.

Tawnypelt blinked at her, flattening her ears. "We caught them hunting on our land yesterday."

"WindClan has fewer warriors than us. I hope they don't get attacked," Tigerstar suddenly admitted. "Did they attack you?"

"Yes. They invaded our camp and attacked us without mercy. Cloudspark's brother, Dewpaw, died in the fighting and some were badly injured," Ambertuft meowed, her voice filled with sympathy.

Tigerstar glanced at Cloudspark sympathetically as her head drooped. "I'm sorry to hear that. But your brother will be welcomed in StarClan," He soothed.

Cloudspark didn't respond to his kind words. She hunched her shoulders, clearly still not over the death of her brother.

"Well, I think we'll go now. We only wanted to warn you," Ambertuft meowed. She got to her paws, but stood still as if something was on her mind. "I know I shouldn't be sharing this but... Squirrelstar lost a life in the fighting," she added.

Tigerstar dipped his head. "Thank you for the warning. If we see the rogues, we will chase them off."

Sharppaw glanced at the ShadowClan leader. "Is Sleekwhisker here?" He asked suddenly. If Juniperclaw had returned, surely Sleekwhisker would've.

"No. She stayed with the rogues," Tawnypelt meowed.

"Dawnpelt!" Tigerstar called. "Take Strikestone and Ebonyfur to escort them to the border!" He ordered.

"We told them about the rogues. Tigerstar was grateful or our warning," Ambertuft meowed.

Sharppaw was listening intently to Ambertuft. She was reporting the visit to Squirrelstar and Ivypool. Jaywing and Cloudspark were

talking quietly behind him. Sharppaw pricked his ears. The two she-cats had grown close ever since Cloudspark's brother's death.

"I know how it feels to lose a brother," Jaywing meowed. She was hunched close to the she-cat, her tail-tip resting on her shoulder. "But don't be sad. Dewpaw is probably happier in StarClan. He misses you of course, but he's not suffering now."

Sharppaw turned as Sootwing and Frostpaw came into camp. Frostpaw was proudly walking in camp, a fat thrush in her jaws. *She's just happy my father neglected me a moon ago*.

Falconflight padded over to her, praising her for her catch. He lifted his head and caught Sharppaw's eye, glaring at him. Sharppaw looked away from the warrior. He padded towards the medicine den. Maybe Flamedawn would talk to him.

Pushing through the bramble entrance, Sharppaw saw Flamedawn storing herbs in the loose parts in the bracken. Flamedawn turned around, seeing Sharppaw.

"Hello Sharppaw. Come to help?" Flamedawn asked, his tone friendly.

"Well, no, not this time. I wanted to talk," Sharppaw explained. He suddenly wondered why Mothstripe and Twistedfoot weren't in the den.

Flamedawn must've read his thoughts. "If you're wondering where the others are, they've gone out to collect catmint. Well need some more since leaf-bare is nearing," Flamedawn meowed. He turned back to his herbs. "What did you want to talk about?"

"The rogues. Has StarClan told you anything about them?" Sharppaw asked curiously. He wondered if StarClan could warn them of a future rogue attack.

Flamedawn froze, the fur lifting along his spine. He flattened his ears. "They haven't told me anything of the rogues. But... Ashstar... had a prophecy for me. He told me to be aware of the sharp talon, for it will draw a bloody wound in the Clan." The dark ginger tom

stood up. "Well, whatever that means, I assume it can't be well."

Sharppaw stood, frozen. The medicine cat had turned, his blue eyes cloudy. "I need to check on Palewhisker." Flamedawn caught Sharppaw's eye. "Something wrong?" He asked.

"No, no. I'm fine," Sharppaw murmured. He shifted his paws uncomfortably. As the medicine cat padded from the den, he sighed. Did that prophecy have something to do with the rogues by any chance? He then remembered the words 'sharp talon'. *Or does it have something to do with me?*

Chapter 9

Sharppaw woke up from a training practice in the Dark Forest. He was licking a wound on his leg. Rowandust had trained roughly with him. Rowandust and Wolffang had been training him now, instead of Crowstar.

Sharppaw glanced at Stormpaw, who was sitting next to him, staring at him intently. "You should go get that checked," She suggested, worry clouding her gaze. She pushed herself to her paws as a call sounded from outside the den. It sounded like Smoky.

Stormpaw glanced at Sharppaw apologetically and turned to head from the den, her tail flicking.

Sharppaw lifted his head from grooming and pricked his ears. Then he heard a taunting voice behind him.

"Well, here's the rogue-lover himself!"

Sharppaw growled in his throat. *Frostpaw...*

"Where did you get that scratch, huh, Sharppaw? Did you hurt yourself training with the *rogues*?" Frostpaw taunted.

Sharppaw turned, blinking innocently at her. He smirked. "Well, yes, I have been training with the rogues, like you said," Sharppaw meowed sarcastically.

Frostpaw bristled at his sarcastic comment. "You're just trying to get more attention," she snorted, flicking her tail.

Sharppaw turned away from her, getting to his paws. "And you're always trying to start drama," He sighed. He pushed from the den and headed to the medicine den. He pushed through the bramble entrance. He was slightly disappointed when he saw that Flamedawn wasn't in there.

Twistedfoot was pulling out crumpled and dusty herbs from the stores. He turned around as Sharppaw padded into the medicine den, his green eyes shimmering.

"Hello, Sharppaw. What can I do for you?" The brown tom asked.

"I need.... uh. Can you treat this wound?" Sharppaw murmured. His paws were frozen as Twistedfoot only stared. His eyes followed down Sharppaw's body to his leg, where the scratch was. "Where'd you get that?" He asked, coming closer to inspect the wound.

"Training with the other apprentices," Sharppaw lied. He felt uncomfortable. Twistedfoot shouldn't be able to tell if he was lying.

Twistedfoot pulled up, his eyes slitted. He sighed as he turned around. He turned around again, cobwebs wrapped around his paw, and marigold in his jaws. "You need to start being more careful, Sharppaw."

"Yeah, yeah, I know." Sharppaw's thoughts wondered else where as his wound began to get treated. *It's not like I can tell my dream mentors to keep their claws sheathed.* He then remembered another apprentice he'd met there. It was a gray tom with black splotches called Darkpaw.

"Hello? Sharppaw?"

Sharppaw blinked open his eyes in the gloom. His wound had been treated. He glanced at Twistedfoot. The tom's green gaze dragged away from him.

"Might want to lay off on training exercises for a little bit," Twistedfoot suggested. He turned around again, his tail-tip flicking.

Sharppaw hesitantly turned around and headed outside. Falconflight and Frostpaw were sharing a sparrow in the clearing, while Jaywing and Cloudspark were sharing tongues by the fresh-kill pile. Something caught his eye.

Fluffypelt and Snowbreeze were arguing in the clearing. They were bristling.

Sharppaw padded closer, pricking his ears.

"Don't be near me ever again!" Fluffypelt hissed. "All you do is give all your attention to Frostpaw. You've been snapping at Sharppaw ever since he left the nursery. And you act like Lightpaw doesn't exist!" She growled.

Snowbreeze blinked at her. "So? It's not my fault Sharppaw attacks his sister. Dumb flea-pelt trains with the rogues for StarClan's sake."

Sharppaw flinched, feeling as though claws had raked his face. Had his father been hating him ever since his sister started lies?

"You know what? We're done! I'm done!" Fluffypelt hissed. "If you want to start a toxic family, go do so somewhere else. Just not here. I don't even care!"

"I don't care anymore. It never would've worked out in the first place. You *know* our son trains with the rogues, Fluffypelt. But you just can't admit it. You give him all the attention." Snowbreeze lashed his tail angrily. His amber gazed searched Fluffypelt's gaze.

Fluffypelt glared at her mate. "He is perfectly loyal to his Clan, and will always be. He's more loyal than you are, Snowbreeze. And you're only making yourself look bad for accusing our son of being a traitor!"

Snowbreeze bared his teeth, flexing his claws. It was clear that the two cats were over.

Lightpaw and Monarchpaw were watching with wide eyes, while Frostpaw and Falconflight were watching; Frostpaw's eyes were shining with amusement. Jaywing was watching close by, anger in her eyes.

Before Snowbreeze could reply, Ambertuft walked up. She rested her tail-tip on his shoulder. "Calm down, Snowbreeze. Why can't you two just work things out?"

Snowbreeze looked as if he was about to lash out at his own sister. Sharppaw bristled, a growl rising in his throat. He would protect his mentor if he had to.

"Enough!" Jaywing, the mother of Snowbreeze and Ambertuft padded towards them, her eyes slitted. "Snowbreeze, either treat your mate and kits with respect or stop being with them. Go take a walk in the forest and calm down," she hissed.

Snowbreeze glared at his mother.

Graystripe slid from the elder's den. "Yes, Snowbreeze, keep your fur on."

Snowbreeze glanced around, as if expecting some cat to back him up.

Sharppaw flexed his claws. *Mouse-brain! He thinks to win an argument he just needs some cat to be on his side*!

Thistlepatch padded up, her violet gaze soft. "Calm down. Maybe Snowbreeze is just still upset about the death of his sister."

Snowbreeze looked gratefully at his sister. "Well I miss her. But it's not that." Snowbreeze then turned around and padded from camp, his tail flicking.

Jaywing hung her head, her eyes cloudy with sadness. "I can't even keep this family together," She murmured.

Sharppaw glanced sympathetically at Ambertuft as she caught his eye. *At least Snowbreeze is gone... for now...*

Allegiances 2

ThunderClan:

Leader: Squirrelstar- Dark ginger she-cat with green eyes and a white paw

Deputy: Ivypool- Silver-gray tabby she-cat

Medicine cats: Mothstripe- Pretty golden tabby she-cat with a long, fluffy tail

Twistedfoot- Brown tom with a twisted paw and green eyes

Flamedawn- Dark ginger tom with blue eyes and white paws

Warriors:

Jaywing- Gray tabby she-cat with blue eyes and a torn ear

Mossheart- Black and silver she-cat with green eyes

Whitewing- Small snowy white she-cat with green eyes

Berrynose- Cream colored tom with a thick, short stump for a tail, apprentice- Stormpaw

Blossomfall- Tortoiseshell and white she-cat with petal-shaped white patches

Bramblehawk- Dark brown tom with black stripes and yellow eyes, apprentice- Lightpaw

Sootwing- Gray she-cat, apprentice- Frostpaw

Firestorm- Fire-colored tom with blue eyes and a gray ear-tip, apprentice- Stalkpaw

Fluffypelt- White she-cat with brown spots and blue eyes

Thistlepatch- Gray and white she-cat with strange violet eyes

Snowbreeze- White tom with blue eyes

Ambertuft- Dark ginger she-cat with green eyes, apprentice- Sharppaw

Falconflight- Dark brown tom with green eyes

Willowbrook- Gray and white tabby she-cat, apprentice- Echopaw

Moonshine- Black and silver-white she-cat

Smallfeather- Pale yellow small tom with blue eyes, apprentice- Monarchpaw

Smoky- Gray and white tom

Coriander- Tortoiseshell and white she-cat with amber eyes

Breezestorm- White tom with gray paws

Ripplewind- Cream-white tom with a mask-like pattern around his eyes

Hawkfoot- Muscular brown tabby tom with amber eyes

Phoenixwing- Slender, long-legged flame-colored she-cat with green eyes

Cloudspark- Fluffy white she-cat with yellow eyes and a torn ear

Mistfang- Dark gray tom with green eyes and a silver chest and paws, formerly rogue

Cherryflight- Dark ginger she-cat with amber eyes and gray spots

and white paws, formerly rogue

Petal- Ginger she-cat with green eyes and white petal-shaped spots on her back, formerly rogue

Apprentices:

Echopaw- Pale brown she-cat with green eyes and a white paw

Lightpaw- Pale yellow tom with a long tail and yellow eyes

Sharppaw- Brown tom with a thick-tail and amber eyes

Frostpaw- White she-cat with a feathery tail

Stalkpaw- Broad-shouldered tufty-furred bright ginger tom with green eyes

Stormpaw- Gray tabby she-cat with beautiful green eyes

Monarchpaw- Small tortoiseshell she-cat dappled with white

Queens:

Palewhisker- Black and white she-cat (Expecting Breezestorm's kits)

Elders:

Graystripe- Gray tom with a darker gray stripe

Ferncloud- Gray she-cat with green eyes

Flower- Very old cream-white she-cat

Poppyfrost- Dappled, pale tortoiseshell and white she-cat with a small stub for a tail

WindClan:

Leader: Gorsestar- Mottled pale gray tabby tom with blue eyes

Deputy: Doveclaw- Gray she-cat with white paws and blue eyes and a torn ear

Medicine cats: Kestrelflight- Gray tom with white splotches

Rabbittail- Light brown tom with green eyes and a short tail

Warriors:

Eaglefeather- Golden tom with green eyes and a scarred muzzle

Antpelt- Lithe brown tom with one black ear, apprentice- Flashpaw

Larkwing- Pale brown tabby she-cat

Sedgewhisker- Light brown tabby she-cat, apprentice- Sparkpaw

Slightfoot- Black tom with a flash of white on his chest

Thornstem- Gold-brown tom with golden eyes

Featherpelt- Gray tabby she-cat

Apprentices:

Flashpaw- Dark ginger-brown tabby tom with amber eyes and white splotches, formerly rogue

Sparkpaw- Spiky-furred ginger she-cat with green eyes, formerly rogue

Queens:

Windflower- Small light brown tabby she-cat (Expecting Slightfoot's kits)

Elders:

Whitetail- Small white she-cat

RiverClan:

Leader: Flowerstar- Tortoiseshell and white she-cat with green eyes

Deputy: Reedwhisker- Slender black tom

Medicine cats: Mothwing- Dappled dark golden she-cat

Willowshine- Sleek thick-furred dark gray tabby she-cat

Sapbriar- Milky-white she-cat with gray paws

Warriors:

Rust- Large dark brown tom with amber eyes

Duskpelt- Brown tabby she-cat

Pineshade- Dark ginger tom with a black splotch on his back

Podlight- Sturdy gray and white tom

Mallownose- Light brown tom

Petalfur- Gray and white she-cat with amber eyes

Lizardtail- Light brown tom

Brightmorning- White she-cat with blue eyes

Beetleshell- Black tom with brown paws

Iceriver- Fluffy white she-cat with ice-blue eyes

Brackenpelt- Tortoiseshell she-cat

Owlnose- Brown tabby tom

Jayclaw- Gray tom

Queens:

Curlfeather- Pale brown she-cat (Expecting Pineshade's kits)

ShadowClan:

Leader: Tigerstar- Big dark tiger-striped tabby tom with amber eyes and a torn ear

Deputy: Tawnypelt- Pale tortoiseshell she-cat

Medicine cat: Ravenbreeze- Small black she-cat

Warriors:

Ebonyfur- Black tom with green eyes

Dawnpelt- Cream-furred she-cat, apprentice- Smokepaw

Scorchfur- Dark gray tom, apprentice- Frogpaw

Snowbird- Pure white she-cat

Strikestone- Brown-striped tabby tom, apprentice- Crowpaw

Beenose- White she-cat with black ears

Yarrowleaf- Ginger she-cat with yellow eyes

Berryheart- Black and white she-cat

Juniperclaw- Sleek black tom, formerly rogue, returned

Apprentices:

Crowpaw- Black tom with yellow eyes

Frogpaw- Brown tabby tom

Smokepaw- Dark gray tabby she-cat

Queens:

Cloverfoot- Gray tabby she-cat (Expecting Ebonyfur's kits)

Shrewfoot- Gray she-cat with black feet

Elders:

Littlecloud- Small, thin brown tabby tom with blue eyes

Oakfur- Small brown tom

Smokefoot- Black tom

Rogues:

Leader: Darktail- Big white tom with black spots around his blue eyes and a long black tail

Deputy: Thorn- Large golden tom

Medicine cat: Arch- Brown tabby tom with a white belly and paws

Fighters/Hunters:

Crowfrost- Black and white tom

Redwillow- Mottled brown and ginger tom, training

Rain- Long-furred gray tom with green eyes, training Reed

Nettle- Brown tabby tom with long, spiky fur

Raven- Long-furred black she-cat

Roach- Silver-gray tom

Silt- White she-cat

Flame- Orange she-cat with white belly fur and green eyes

Gravel- Slender gray tom

Sleekwhisker- Golden she-cat with yellow eyes, training Stripe

Coco- Small pale brown tom

Snake- Golden-brown she-cat with yellow-green eyes

Thistle- Muscular gray tom with blue eyes

Mothers:

Shimmer- Black and white she-cat (Mother to Crowfrost's kits: Raven, Ice Shadow, and Shinekit)

Moon- Silver she-cat (Mother to Redwillow's kits: Embers, Shredkit, and Slatekit)

Snow- White she-cat (Expecting Thistle's kits)

In-Training:

Frog- Skinny pale brown tom with yellow eyes

Stripe- Gray tabby tom with black stripe

Reed- Gray tom with yellow eyes

Other cats outside Clans:

Lucky- Black tom, kittypet

Chafree- Plump pale brown tom, kittypet

Arbonx- Black tom with amber eyes and a skunk-badger-like pattern, kittypet

Chapter 10

A freezing breeze blew across the camp. Leaf-bare had began, which meant prey was scarce. But it had a moon since the cold season started. The Clan was still thriving. Sharppaw's training got progressively better. His bond with his sister and father got worse.

Sharppaw dragged his gaze away from the dull sky. Snow would come soon. He could taste it in the air. The dull clouds had been slowly dragging themselves across the sky for what seemed like a moon until they finally stopped. Sharppaw shivered as a cold breeze touched his fur. He felt alone.

Ever since Fluffypelt and Snowbreeze separated, Stormpaw had been trying to avoid Sharppaw. He didn't know why. Maybe she felt too sympathetic for him and wanted to give him space. But Sharppaw thought she'd at least try to comfort him.

"Sharppaw?"

Sharppaw turned and saw his brother, Lightpaw, behind him. The pale tom walked up to him and sat down, curling his tail around his paws. Sharppaw avoided his brother's gaze and stared up at the sky again. He fluffed out his pelt as the freezing air touched his bones.

"Don't be sad." Lightpaw was gazing at Sharppaw warmly. He pressed against his brother's broad shoulder. "Maybe it is best for them."

Sharppaw closed his eyes, holding back a sigh. Maybe Lightpaw was right. But he thought his mother would be happy with Snowbreeze. Instead, everything fell apart. Stormpaw avoided him, most cats in camp saw him as a traitor, Frostpaw's taunts got worse, and many more things.

Lightpaw looked away, his yellow gaze shimmering. He pulled away from the warmth of Sharppaw's shoulder and got to his paws. "Well I've got to go. I promised Monarchpaw I'd hunt with her today. See you later." He cast a sympathetic glance at Sharppaw before turning away.

An idea surfaced in Sharppaw's mind. He turned around and glanced at Lightpaw. "Wait, Lightpaw!" He waited for his brother to turn around. "Could you please ask Stormpaw why she won't talk to me?" He asked.

Lightpaw lifted his tail, shifting his paws. "I think I might ask Monarchpaw to do that. After all, she is Stormpaw's sister."

Sharppaw glanced warmly at his brother. He turned around again, his body feeling cold again. *Maybe a walk from camp will calm me down.* Sharppaw got to his paws and headed towards the entrance, his tail flicking.

Sharppaw clambered over a hill, his claws poking leaves on the ground. His gaze was fixed ahead on a weird-looking tree. There were scratch marks on the tree. He tasted fox scent and could hear voices. Sharppaw pricked his ears and then tasted WindClan scent.

"Hey maybe we should go back, Flashpaw."

"Come on. It won't hurt to explore a little bit!" A voice replied.

"Do you smell that?"

"Smell what?"

Sharppaw suddenly heard a screech. Bristling, he ran forward and scrambled over a mound of dirt. He spotted two small cats, possibly apprentices. A fox had backed them up against a tree. Sharppaw lashed his tail.

The spiky-furred ginger she-cat was bristling and looked twice her size, her green eyes wide with fear. "I told you we never should've come here!" She gasped.

The dark ginger-brown tom beside her flattened his ears, lashing

out at the fox's nose. The fox only flinched back and snarled, showing its large fangs. Drool spilled from its gaping mouth.

Sharppaw clawed up a tree, breathing hard. He'd never fought a fox before, but he knew they were vicious creatures. He could smell the WindClan apprentices' fear scent.

"Mess with someone your own size, mange-pelt!" Sharppaw yowled, bunching his muscles and flying from the tree. The fox turned its head, its eyes wide with surprise. *I bet it didn't see that coming!* Sharppaw sank his claws into the fox's fur, lashing his tail. The fox scrambled around, its jaws snapping at Sharppaw. Sharppaw flinched back, but wasn't fast enough. Teeth met into his flesh and ripped.

Sharppaw yowled with pain, his eyes rolling back. He ignored the pain though. He rolled on the ground again, twisting away from snapping jaws. The fox yowled with rage and snapped at his tail. Sharppaw leaped in the air and landed on the creature's shoulder. He clamped his jaws on the fox's ear and slashed at its head and cheeks.

"Amazing!"

Sharppaw heard one of the apprentice's cries. Then he was knocked to the ground by the fox. Before Sharppaw could even move, the fox had pinned him down. Sharppaw stared at the fox in surprise. Fear surged through him. He tried to pummel the fox's belly with his hind claws, but he couldn't move his legs. This is it! This is where I die, trying to help cats I don't even know.

Suddenly, a yowl sounded at the top slope. A large black figure stood at the top of the hill. That wasn't a ThunderClan cat. It was outside Clan territory. The fox turned its head.

The figure ran forward and Sharppaw could see the details more clearly. It was a large white tom with blazing blue eyes. He had black spots around his eyes and a long, feathery black tail. *Darktail!* Sharppaw remembered that that was the rogue that had tried to kill Jaywing and Stormpaw. He lashed his tail. What was *he* doing here?

Darktail leaped in front of the fox. He then lashed out at the creature's throat quickly. The fox made a choking noise as fur from its throat tore and a skinny gash tore in its throat. Darktail lashed again, this time with two paws. The flesh of the the fox's throat tore like a tattered leaf and it coughed up blood.

Blood spilled from the gash in the fox's throat and it spattered on the ground. Red stained the dirt and grass and Sharppaw stared in surprise as the fox fell to the ground in defeat, its head rolling limply on the ground and its shoulders slumping. Blood pooled around the fox. It twitched before falling limp. It was dead.

Darktail looked up from licking his bloody paw. His blue eyes shimmered with satisfaction. "Huh. No 'thank you'?"

Chapter 11

Dim sunlight broke through the tops of the trees. The leaves rustled and the branches creaked and swayed in the freezing wind.

"Well?" Darktail sneered.

Sharppaw flattened his ears. "*You!*" He hissed. "You're the one who tried to kill my friend, Stormpaw! You're an evil mange-pelt!" He snarled, flexing his claws. He wanted to leap at the rogue leader.

"Calm down, *Clan cat.* I saved your tail," Darktail growled. "Or I could've just left you for the fox to kill," He suggested.

Sharppaw hung his head, his tail drooping. "Well I.... I could've beaten it myself!" He growled, lashing his tail.

Darktail didn't reply. His icy gaze dragged to the two WindClan apprentices. He flattened his ears. "Flash and Spark?" He asked suspiciously.

"I'm Flashpaw now," The dark ginger-brown tom meowed, his amber eyes shimmering.

"And I'm Sparkpaw now," The spiky-furred ginger she-cat meowed, flicking her tail. She turned to Sharppaw. "Thank you for saving me and my brother!" She mewed.

"I'm Sharppaw by the way, an apprentice of ThunderClan," Sharppaw meowed. He flicked his tail. He didn't know that those two cats had been rogues before.

"You three are coming back with me," Darktail growled.

"But-" Sharppaw protested.

"Come back with me, Sharppaw, or these two die!" Darktail hissed, throwing himself on the two young cats. He pinned them down, his claws unsheathed.

Sharppaw's heart pounded in his ears. "Ok, ok. Just don't hurt them. They're young," he pleaded.

Darktail smiled, his blue eyes shimmering with happiness. "Follow me."

Sharppaw padded into a clearing surrounded by pines and oaks. Ferns and low undergrowth crowded in. Flashpaw and Sparkpaw crowded around him, shaking.

Sleekwhisker was the first cat to walk up to them, her yellow eyes shimmering with suspicion. "Isn't that brown tom the cat that wounded you badly?" She asked, narrowing her eyes.

"Yes, and we're holding him hostage along with these two cats," Darktail meowed, flicking his tail.

Sharppaw bristled, glaring at the rogue. "Holding me hostage?" He hissed, lashing his tail. *Is he crazy?*

Darktail glanced at him. "Uh, yeah. Don't worry. It's not like your Clan would care if you were missing anyway." Darktail glanced at him, his blue eyes shimmering with a slight sympathy. "You slightly remind me of myself. My father abandoned me just like yours did," he murmured.

Sharppaw glanced at the rogue leader, blinking. He felt his belly growl. The pain in his shoulder was still flashing in his flesh. He clenched his teeth.

"Come on buddy, lets get you fixed up," Darktail meowed, blinking. He turned around and padded across the clearing, heading towards a tree with bracken and bramble crowding around it. Sharppaw followed him, hearing Sleekwhisker's voice.

"Come on, you two, follow me to the prisoners' den."

"Where are we going?" Sharppaw asked, his gaze dragging towards

the sky. Rain started to lightly patter around them. Sharppaw quickened his pace, following Darktail into the den.

A light brown tabby tom was in the den. He had a white belly and paws. His amber gaze flicked towards them as he blinked open his eyes from sleep. He yawned. "Morning, Darktail. Who's this?" He asked.

"Sharppaw. An apprentice of ThunderClan. I found him with two of our runaways. We're keeping him hostage with the other two apprentices. I hope that ThunderClan can give us some of their prey, and if they do, they can take these apprentices back," Darktail meowed. His blue gaze dragged to Sharppaw, his eyes fixing on his shoulder wound.

"But he's our hostage, and we can't have him hurt in our camp, can we? Fix him up, Arch," he ordered, his blue eyes shimmering. Darktail flicked his tail.

Sharppaw shifted his paws. He didn't like being here, but if he left, the rogues might kill him. He shivered as Darktail rested his tail on his shoulders. He then wondered how the big white tom knew that his father neglected him. He didn't feel like asking though.

"Come foward, Sharppaw," Arch meowed, flicking his white-tipped tail. He had cobwebs wrapped around his paw.

"You put marigold on it first so it doesn't get infected," Sharppaw reminded. He glanced at Darktail, who was watching him intently.

"Hm. What other herbs do you know?" Darktail asked, his gaze sharpening with interest.

"Not many others. Just that you would chew marigold into a pulp and rub it into the wound so it doesn't get infected. Then you would dress it with cobwebs. Trust me, I've been in the medicine den many time to know this," Sharppaw meowed. He thought of telling them about borage or catmint, then thought better. If they had a stronger knowledge of herbs, they'd be more powerful.

Darktail blinked. "Think you can remember that, Arch?" He asked,

flicking his tail.

"Sure," Arch meowed. He pulled marigold out of a hole in the ground. He brushed off the dust with his paws, then began to chew it. He shook out his paw before spitting out a chewed out pulp onto his paw. He slathered it into Sharppaw's wound.

Sharppaw winced as the juices sank in, but the pain soon faded. He felt cobwebs being applied to his wound. He hadn't noticed that Darktail left the den.

"DarkClan! All cats gather around me for this important announcement!" Darktail yowled outside the den.

Sharppaw slightly pushed forward, peering from the den.

"Don't move too much," Arch meowed.

Sharppaw watched Darktail with interest. He caught the white tom's eye. He'd called this camp 'DarkClan'.

"I have found Flash and Spark, the two cats who left us about a half-moon ago. I found them with Sharppaw, a ThunderClan apprentice. I've decided to hold them hostage. We'll give back to ThunderClan in exchange for some of their prey!" Darktail yowled, his voice clear.

The cats in the clearing exchanged excited glances.

"It will make ThunderClan weak. Then we can attack them later and take over ThunderClan," Darktail meowed, satisfaction in his voice.

Sharppaw looked away. *Well good luck doing that. ThunderClan has many warriors.* He rested his head on his paws, darkness swallowing him. He fell into sleep.

Chapter 12

Sharppaw leaped on Darktail, his paw catching the tom's cheek. The large white rogue shoved him away with his hind paws. Sharppaw hit the ground hard, clenching his teeth. Before he could even move, Darktail had pinned him down.

"Good fighting, Sharppaw. It was nice to train with you," Darktail praised. "You and Ambertuft probably never trained roughly like this?" He prompted.

"No," Sharppaw meowed. He thought about telling the tom how he trained roughly in the Dark Forest, but he thought better of it. He'd been in DarkClan for about a day and a half. Maybe Darktail *was* right about his Clan not caring about him.

"You know, Sharppaw," Darktail began, "ThunderClan hasn't come to look for you. How awful. Well, they've just a great fighter."

Sharppaw glanced at the tom, his neck fur slightly rising. He felt so alone. Maybe he should join the rogues.

"They don't want you, Sharppaw. They just don't understand what good of a fighter you are," Darktail meowed, his voice smooth. "You're like me. If you stay, we can be *good friends.* You could lead beside me."

Sharppaw gulped. If he stayed with the rogues, Snowbreeze would be so happy as well as Frostpaw. But Lightpaw and Fluffypelt would miss him. He didn't want to break their hearts. He had a hope that maybe they were searching for them.

"Why don't we go back to camp? I bet you're hungry after all the training," Darktail meowed. He flicked his tail.

"No, lets train more, until I win," Sharppaw growled. He pushed

himself to his paws and stood his ground. "Do your worst." *I will win!*

"Ok," Darktail meowed cooly. He darted forward, lashing at Sharppaw's shoulder.

Sharppaw flinched back but Darktail's other paw hit his shoulder. He mewed with surprise and, distracted, was hit in the legs by Darktail's lashing paws.

"Don't get distracted," Darktail growled, slashing at Sharppaw's ears.

Sharppaw rolled clear of the third blow and darted towards Darktail's shoulder. He landed a hard blow as Darktail turned, surprise lighting in his eyes. Sharppaw kicked out with his hind paw, catching Darktail's paw. He knocked the tom over with a hard shove.

Sharppaw leaped on Darktail, putting a paw to the tom's throat. "Give up?" He hissed, lashing his tail.

"You forgot," Darktail panted.

Sharppaw was confused for a second, then panic surged through him as he felt paws pummel his belly. He was knocked back, falling hard on his shoulder. He gasped with pain.

Darktail leaped on Sharppaw. "Enough training, we should go back to camp," he hissed, unsheathing his claws now. They were long and sharp.

Sharppaw glanced at him, looking into his blue eyes. "Fine," he spat. He pushed himself to his paws as Darktail padded through the undergrowth, heading to a gap in the pines.

Sharppaw quickened his pace catching up to Darktail. He padded by his side, shaking dirt and dust from his pelt. He flicked his tail.

"What's your least favorite Clan?"

The question took Sharppaw by surprise. He didn't know how to

respond. "I don't really have a least favorite Clan," he admitted.

"Huh, well, I hate all the Clans, especially WindClan," Darktail huffed, puffing out his chest.

The two cats padded along in an awkward silence until they reached the camp. Thorn and Rain were arguing again, their pelts bristling.

Sharppaw stopped beside Darktail. He looked up at the tom. His eyes were narrowed with his tail lashing back and forth.

"Rain!" Darktail yowled, has voice clear. "Enough!"

Rain turned towards him, his green eyes narrowed. He lashed his tail. "But Thorn is doing such a bad job! He can't even fight-"

His sentence was interrupted as Thorn leaped on him, his claws raking his flanks. Fur tore from his sides and a scratch formed on Rain's flank, leaking blood. Rain turned on the tom, lifting a paw to slash at Thorn's cheek. Blood splattered on the ground.

Darktail stared at them, his gaze calm. He sighed.

Sharppaw began to pad forward, his gaze fixed on the two vicious fighting cats. A tail blocked his path. "Don't," Darktail growled. "Lets see who wins."

Rain overpowered Thorn with his size and clamped his jaws around the golden tabby's throat. Sharppaw thought he would kill him, but Thorn responded by pummeling him back roughly with his hind paws.

Rain was knocked back, a clump of golden fur in his mouth. He spat it out and shook out his pelt. His belly fur was torn and matted and blood stained it, dripping on the ground. He flattened his ears and leaped on Thorn, clawing at his face without mercy.

Thorn yowled as Rain's claws raked his eyes suddenly. Large gashes ran down his face, covering his eyes. Blood streamed from the gashes. He stumbled on the ground, his lips curled in a snarl, his teeth clenched with pain.

Darktail stood up and padded over before Rain could finish it. He glared down at Thorn. "What a shame," Darktail sighed, "my own deputy can't even beat one of his Campmates."

Thorn turned weakly towards him. "I fought just as hard, Darktail, I swear. I didn't know he would blind me!" He yowled, pain clenching his mew.

Darktail shoved the tom aside, twitching his whiskers. He turned to Rain. "You'll be my new deputy, Rain. But listen, buddy, challenge me for *leadership*, and I know where you'll end up," he growled.

Rain blinked at him, nodding.

Darktail glanced down at Thorn. "As for you, you shall be exiled from the Clan. You're blind, and you'd be no use here. Scram!" He hissed. He glanced at Sharppaw. "Escort him to the border, Sharppaw. Leave him in the forest to rot."

Sharppaw quickly padded over to Thorn. He helped the rogue get to his paws. As they headed across the clearing, Sharppaw helped the tom out through the entrance. Padding deeper into the forest, Sharppaw let Thorn cross over the ThunderClan border.

Thorn turned to look at him, his eyes closed and red. One eye looked better than the other, but blood still trickled from the gashes along his face. "Sharppaw, you can leave with me."

Sharppaw blinked at him. "No, I can't. If I leave, Darktail will kill those two apprentices."

Thorn dropped his tail, then padded closer. "Will ThunderClan let me in?"

"Probably not. They don't like rogues. Especially Cloudspark," Sharppaw meowed. "But go to their camp. Tell them where I am. I don't like this rogue camp," he murmured.

Thorn nodded and turned away, leaving behind a dotted trail of blood.

Sharppaw turned around and headed into the ferns, his pelt

prickling. *I hope Darktail didn't follow me*. Sharppaw sighed as he padded on, his tail flicking.

Chapter 13

Sharppaw woke up in his den to the noise of angry yowls. Flashpaw and Sparkpaw were curled up beside him, snoring gently. He blinked sleep away from his eyes and pushed himself to his paws, lifting his head to see over the tangle of brambles in the entrance to his den.

Squirrelstar was by the camp entrance, Ivypool at her side. She padded into the camp, glaring around. Rogues stalked from their dens, bristling.

Falconflight, Frostpaw, Firestorm, Snowbreeze, Berrynose, Stormpaw, Smoky, Sootwing, Bramblehawk, Blossomfall, Monarchpaw, Fluffypelt, and Ambertuft padded into camp behind them, their tails high.

Darktail darted from his den, his tail lifted, his ears flat. Rain and Roach flanked him, their gazes cold. "Why are you here? This is DarkClan territory!" Darktail hissed.

Squirrelstar lifted her chin. Even if she was slightly smaller than the rogue leader, her gaze showed no fear. She was staring coldly at Darktail, her ears flattened, her bushy tail lashing. "Give us back Sharppaw! We know you have him, Darktail!" She hissed.

Darktail stared innocently at her. "What? How did you know we had him?" He asked.

"Thorn, one of your cats, came to our camp in a seriously injured state. He told us that you had Sharppaw and two other apprentices. Give them back to us now, or we will fight for them!"

Sharppaw's heart sank. Squirrelstar was outnumbered. The fight wouldn't be worth it. He saw Stormpaw glance towards him,

catching his eye. She didn't say anything. *What's wrong with her?*

"Thorn? That weak cat-dirt came to you? Of course he would, all he does is want some cat to be by his side at all times," Darktail sighed. He then blinked, flattening his ears as if something had struck him. He glanced in Sharppaw's direction catching his eye. *Does he suspect that I told Thorn to go there?*

"Well?" Squirrelstar prompted. "Are you going to give us Sharppaw or not?"

"Well, yes, of course I will. But only in return for most of your prey," Darktail explained.

"Our prey? StarClan, no, it's leaf-bare! It's not worth it. We'd rather fight. It would be easier since you're rogues with no skill," Squirrelstar hissed, baring her teeth.

Darktail smirked. He unsheathed his claws. "Really? You're outnumbered, *Clan-cat.*"

Squirrelstar looked around, realizing that the rogue leader was right. Her pelt bristled. "Alright, then we'll go to camp and get reinforcements." As she turned to leave, Raven, Sleekwhisker, Redwillow, and Nettle padded over and blocked the entrance, bristling.

Squirrelstar turned around, glaring at Darktail. "Move them away from the entrance!" She hissed.

"It's a bit to late for that, Squirrelstar," the rogue leader warned. Suddenly, Darktail lashed out with a paw, slashing Squirrelstar's throat.

Sharppaw gasped with horror as Squirrelstar coughed up blood, her eyes widening in surprise. Blood gushed from the gash in her throat, splashing on ground and streaming towards Darktail's paws. Squirrelstar then fell limp on the ground, blood trickling from her open mouth. Her eyes stared into the distance.

"Squirrelstar, no!" Ivypool gasped with horror. She crouched down beside her leader, her pelt bristling.

Darktail lifted his chin, standing in the pool of Squirrelstar's blood. "DarkClan! Attack!" He yowled, leaping on Ivypool.

Sharppaw swung around as Flashpaw and Sparkpaw woke up beside him, shaking. "What's happening?" They gasped.

"A fight," Sharppaw breathed. He watched closely, his heart pounding in his ears.

Stormpaw and Reed were fighting eachother, their claws swinging. Blood spattered the ground. Soon, Stormpaw had her enemy pinned down. But suddenly, Rain darted across the clearing, leaping Stormpaw, claws outstretched. *No!*

Sharppaw shoved his way past the brambles blocking the entrance. The thorns raked his pelt, but he ignored it. Getting to Stormpaw was all that mattered. When he burst through the den entrance, he heard a desperate yowl to his side.

Sharppaw turned to see Raven pinning Sootwing to the ground. The gray warrior had a gash in her flank that was bleeding heavily. Sharppaw almost thought he should help her. *No, she can handle it, I'm sure. But Stormpaw can't handle two cats*.

Sharppaw raced forward, shoving Rain off of Stormpaw. The long-furred tom turned on him, his claws slashing at Sharppaw's ears. A blow caught his tip when Sharppaw didn't duck in time. Pain clawed through him as blood spattered the ground. He swung a paw at Rain's chest, tugging out a clump of fur.

Rain yowled and shoved Sharppaw back, making him fall back on the ground. Before Sharppaw could move, Rain caught his cheek. Blood spattered the ground. He raised a paw to finish him off, but suddenly a flash of white and brown fur shoved Rain off of him. *Fluffypelt!*

Sharppaw raced forward to help his mother defeat Rain, but he heard a screech behind him. He turned, seeing Stormpaw pinned down by Reed. He raced to his friend's side, knocking Reed off of her. "Scram, flea-pelt!" He hissed to Reed. He slashed the tom's cheek and shoved him back when he tried to stand. The gray tom

scrambled to his paws, darting away from him.

Stormpaw got to her paws, shaking out her dusty blood-stained pelt. There was a scratch on her muzzle and a deep gash in her flank. She was panting, clearly tired.

Sharppaw licked the scratch on her muzzle. "Stormpaw," he murmured.

She flashed him a sympathetic look. "I'm sorry," she whispered.

Sharppaw turned around, wanting to help his mother. He darted towards Rain, who had Fluffypelt pinned, slashing at his shoulder. Fur tore and blood spattered the ground.

Stormpaw leaped beside him, clawing Rain's ears.

The long-furred gray tom lashed out blindly as blood from a scratch above his eye trickled into his eyes. Sharppaw avoided most of his blows and reared, shoving the tom away. He then gasped with horror as he saw Fluffypelt. "No!" He gasped.

Fluffypelt had a gash in her throat. Her fur was torn around the gash and blood trickled from her mouth, dripping from her chin. Blood stained her pretty white fur and streamed from the gash. Her pale blue eyes stared at Sharppaw.

"No, no, Fluffypelt! Stay with me, please!" Sharppaw gasped, crouching beside his mother. His heart stopped beating for a second. *This can't be real, no!*

"I'm afraid I can't, Sharppaw. You'll have to grow up without me," Fluffypelt rapsed. Blood pooled around her, wading around Sharppaw's paws. "You're a fine warrior and you can make it without me." Suddenly, her eyes shimmered with stars and dulled. "Too bad I can't... change your.. des-destiny."

Sharppaw was too grief-stricken to be confused. He yowled with pain as she fell limp, her head lolling. Her fur was beginning to get cold. "No!" Sharppaw whimpered. "StarClan, why?!"

Stormpaw rested her tail-tip on his shoulder, her gaze sympathetic.

"I'm sorry, Sharppaw," she whispered.

Sharppaw buried his muzzle in Fluffypelt's fur, whimpering softly. *How many more will die?*

Chapter 14

Sharppaw pushed himself to his paws, anger flaring through him. *I promise I'll get revenge for you, Fluffypelt!* He looked up at the sky miserably. The stars weren't out yet, obviously, but he felt as though his mother was watching him. Energy surged through him. "I swear I'm going to kill Rain!" He growled.

Stormpaw glanced at him, grief flashing in her eyes. "No, Sharppaw, for now we must fight for our Clan, not just for ourselves. Killing Rain won't bring Fluffypelt back," Stormpaw whispered.

"I know it won't. But I'm taking revenge! I'll make sure that excuse of a cat learns his lesson!" Sharppaw growled, bristling.

"No, put your Clan first, please. We are badly outnumbered now. We should go back to ThunderClan and get help," Stormpaw pleaded.

Sharppaw blinked at her. She was right. "No, you go. I'm staying to help my Clan. Good luck, Stormpaw," Sharppaw meowed, lifting his tail.

Stormpaw blinked warmly at him. "Stay strong, Sharppaw," she whispered before turning away and darting towards the entrance.

Sharpppaw lowered his head to Fluffypelt's muzzle, sniffing. She was stiff already. "Next time," he murmured.

Suddenly, a hard weight slammed into Sharppaw. He twisted around to see Falconflight. The dark brown tom had pinned him down, his green eyes burning with rage.

Blood pounding in Sharppaw's ears, he stared at Falconflight. "Hey, I'm on your side!" He reminded.

"I'm with the rogues now," Falconflight hissed. "It's not fair to these rogues for the Clan cats to just randomly attack," He growled.

Sharppaw flattened his ears. "Traitor! I never knew you'd be the one turning on your Clan to be with the *rogues*! You always hated them and hated *me* for thinking I was one of *them!*" Sharppaw growled.

"I've changed. Frostpaw has too," Falconflight growled. "Joining the rogues is the only way to make sure you die along with any kin your cursed paws decide to touch!" He growled.

Outraged, Sharppaw remembered one of Darktail's moves, and began to pummel Falconflight's belly with his hind paws, hissing. He tore out clumps of fur and drew gashes in the warrior's belly. He was finally able to shove him off of him. Blood spattered the ground, dripping from Falconflight's belly.

Sharppaw leaped on him, but then felt something shove him off the brown warrior. Snowbreeze was looming over him, his blue eyes shimmering. He had a scratch on his shoulder and half of one of his ears was missing, tickling blood. He glared down at his son, teeth bared. "It's your time to die, Sharppaw!" He yowled.

Suddenly, dark ginger fur flashed towards them, grabbing Snowbreeze by his scruff and hauling him off of Sharppaw. Squirrelstar!

"Get off him, traitor!" Squirrelstar hissed, lashing her tail. She helped Sharppaw get to his paws. "Are you ok?" She asked.

"I think so," Sharppaw swallowed hard. He probably would've died if Squirrelstar hadn't of raced toward him.

Falconflight and Snowbreeze huddled together, panting. "Why did you stop me?" Snowbreeze asked, his tail lashing.

"Because this is your Clanmate," Squirrelstar hissed. "We came here to *rescue* him, not *kill* him, mouse-brain!" She snarled, whiskers twitching.

Falconflight bristled. "You're a weak leader if you can't see that *Sharppaw* is clearly the traitor. We're doing you a favor by killing him," he growled.

"Me, a *traitor*? Funny how I hear that coming from a cat whose father was *Rowandust!*" Squrrielstar hissed, lashing her tail.

Falconflight lashed his tail, but said nothing.

"I'm not afraid to kill you if I have to," Squirrelstar added, unsheathing her claws.

"And I'm not afraid to kill you!" Snowbreeze yowled, launching himself at the ThunderClan leader, his claws fully extended.

"Squirrelstar!" Sharppaw gasped with horror. He raced forward to help his leader, but Falconflight darted in front of him, slashing Sharppaw's nose. Blood spattered on the ground and Sharppaw felt pain claw through him. He yowled with rage, flinging himself at Falconflight, but the warrior dodged and Sharppaw slipped in a puddle of fresh blood. His heart stopped. Was that Squirrelstar's blood?

Falconflight's paw caught Sharppaw's cheek, knocking to the side. Blood stained his fur. "Learn how to fight, weak apprentice!" He taunted. He shoved Sharppaw away from him and leaped on him.

Sharppaw slithered under him like a snake as Falconflight's claws almost gouged into his eyes. He clamped his jaws around the tom's ankle, making him stumble and lose his balance. Sharppaw slashed at Falconflight's flanks, satisfaction surging through him as he heard the tom growl with pain.

Falconflight twisted around, but was slow. Sharppaw pinned him down, his claws sinking deeply in Falconflight's shoulders. The dark brown tom flattened his ears, smirking.

Suddenly, teeth sank deeply in Sharppaw's scruff and he was hauled into the air. He screeched with terror, the breath driven from him as he hit the ground, rolling. His head was pounding with pain. Turning over shakily, he saw Squirrelstar's limp body lying on the

ground, blood pooled around it. A gash was torn in her throat, going all the way down to her belly. She lay still.

Snowbreeze and Falconflight stalked towards him, their gazes icy. Snowbreeze leaped on him, pinning him down. Sharppaw gazed pleadingly at his father. "Don't worry, Sharppaw, I'll make your death quick."

Falconflight then pressed his claws into Sharppaw's flank. He yelped with pain and watched in horror as blood trickled from the wound slowly.

Sharppaw gasped with horror as Snowbreeze lowered his head towards him, his jaws gaping. His jaws clamped around Sharppaw's throat. His teeth hadn't sank in too deep. Was he planning to choke him? Sharppaw wriggled with pain as his throat got tighter. *I can't breathe! I'm going to die!* His lungs were screaming for air and his head ached with pain. It felt like he was drowning.

Sharppaw struggled to stay alive. It was torture. His struggles became weaker and his vision began to darker. He thought he could see the spirit of Fluffypelt floating just above him, as if waiting to welcome him into StarClan.

Suddenly, a yowled rang across the clearing. Stormpaw and Lightpaw were racing towards him, Echopaw bringing up the rear. "Get away from him, mange-pelts!" Stormpaw hissed with rage. She leaped on Snowbreeze, raking her claws across his muzzle.

As Snowbreeze was knocked off Sharppaw, he rolled limply on his side, gasping for air. He whimpered weakly as he finally gulped enough air. He lay weakly in a puddle of his own blood, his breathing shallow. Stormpaw then stood over him, her eyes wide with horror. Grief clouded her eyes with pain.

"Sharppaw, oh StarClan, please be alive!" Stormpaw whimpered.

Sharppaw stared weakly at her, panting. The darkness in his eyes began to clear. A faded cat suddenly appeared beside him. It was Fluffypelt. She looked a tiny bit young. Her throat gash was gone and her white and brown fur twinkled with stars. She blinked

warmly at him before fading away.

"Back away from him, he needs to breathe!" Squirrelstar warned, racing towards them. A large scar was running from her throat to her chest. Echopaw and Lightpaw were at her side, their eyes wide with horror.

Sharppaw took deep breaths of air, his heart pounding. He tried to scramble to his paws.

"Thank StarClan!" Stormpaw gasped. She helped Sharppaw get to his paws. Lightpaw buried his muzzle deep in Sharppaw's shoulder, shaking.

"I went back to camp and then brought Lightpaw, Echopaw, Hawkfoot, Willowbrook, and Smallfeather. I didn't think Snowbreeze and Falconflight would betray us like this," Stormpaw meowed.

"I didn't either. They aren't welcome in ThunderClan now. Not after this," Squirrelstar hissed. She turned to Echopaw. "You fought bravely in this battle, Echopaw. You gave Snowbreeze something to remember! I think you deserve your warrior name," she meowed thoughtfully.

Echopaw gazed warmly at her. "Thank you," she murmured.

"We surrender! Take your stupid Clanmates and go!"

Sharppaw turned to see Darktail standing in the middle of the clearing, his chin raised. He looked regretful.

Squirrelstar lifted her chin, letting out a yowl of victory. Sharppaw felt empty inside. A bloody victory. Fluffypelt died along with Falconflight, Snowbreeze, and Frostpaw. Squirrelstar had also lost two lives.

As they walked across the clearing, they passed the dead body of Sootwing. Sharppaw felt horrible inside. *Oh no! Is this my fault? I saw she was struggling with Raven and I didn't help! I'm so stupid!* Sharppaw looked away as Squirrelstar hauled Sootwing's dead body over her shoulders.

As they joined the rest of their Clanmates, Sharppaw saw that Firestorm, Ivypool, and Willowbrook had the body of Fluffypelt.

Lightpaw tensed and yowled with pain and grief.

"We can grieve back at camp. For now we need to focus on getting every cat back to camp," Squirrelstar meowed, grief clawing her voice.

As Sharppaw limped away from the rogues with his Clanmates, his body began to grow tired, his breath wheezy. He could feel blood trickling through his fur like tiny snakes. Suddenly Sharppaw collapsed, his vision darkening.

Chapter 15

Clouds drifted over the half-moon that hung in the pitch black night sky. Stars twinkled here and there in the sky and the camp was silent except for a few crickets buzzing. It had been a moon and a half since the battle either the rogues. Sharppaw had been so badly injured that he'd collapsed, and Smoky had died shortly after due to his injuries.

Sharppaw rested his chin on his paws. *And Monarchpaw hates me now, blaming me for her father's death.* He swept his tail closer to him. Stormpaw was in a deep sleep beside him, her flank slowly rising and falling.

Lightpaw was curled up with Monarchpaw near the den entrance, while Stalkpaw was snoozing alone in a moonlit patch in the corner of the den.

The den seemed a bit empty without Frostpaw, who'd left to join the rogues, and Echopaw, who had earned her warrior name, Echostrike, and moved to the warriors' den.

A branch suddenly snapped.

Sharppaw lifted his head. He couldn't sleep. He got to his paws and crept from the den quietly, his shoulders feeling heavy. He sat down, looking at the sky. Time was slow as he watched the clouds drift across the moon. Then a large cloud pass over the moon, and no more crossed into the shimmering ball of light.

A cold breeze traveled in the strong wind, ruffling Sharppaw's fur. Snow had fallen the night before, and Sharppaw was hoping that snow wouldn't come again. Palewhisker had also given birth to Sparrowkit, Beechkit, and Rookkit, but Sparrowkit had died

overnight due to the harsh cold.

"Sharppaw?"

Sharppaw snapped around, wondering who'd called his name. Straining his eyes through the darkness, he spotted Squirrelstar sitting on the high-rock, her tail high. Sharppaw padded over to her. Coldness pricked his pads like a sharp claw.

"Why are you up so late at night?" Squirrelstar asked, her tail curling around her paws. She sat down as Sharppaw sat down next to her.

"I can't sleep," Sharppaw admitted, his body shivering.

"Why?" Squirrelstar asked.

"I miss my mother," Sharppaw whimpered. Looking down and flexing his claws, he added, "I never got the revenge I wanted."

Moving her tail from around her paws, Squirrelstar let it rest on Sharppaw's shoulders as he hung his head low, closing his eyes. "I know you miss her, but it's just a part of life, to die. No cat lives forever."

Sharppaw avoided her gaze. "I feel like no other cat cares about me more than she did. She loved me," he murmured. Feeling like he couldn't stop, he continued without waiting for his Clan leader to reply, "I feel like everything has been just so messed up lately! A-and I feel like I'm the problem! And every one of my Clanmates hate me! And I can never get enough sleep, and I just... I just..."

Squirrelstar huddled closer to him, pressing her warmth on him. "Relax, Sharppaw. I know how it feels to lose cats who deeply care about you. But for the caring cats who are still alive, I'm sure that they wouldn't you to feel like this," she whispered.

"That's not just all. Lightpaw feels like Monarchpaw is more important than me. He never has time for me. Stormpaw is my only friend ever since Jaywing lost interest in me," Sharppaw growled, feeling his heart pound in his chest.

Squirrelstar looked as if she didn't know what to say. "Be happy for your brother. Get some rest, Sharppaw, and maybe you'll feel better in the morning," Squirrelstar suggested before getting up and walking back towards the High-Rock.

Sharppaw got to his paws, trudging back to his den. He curled up beside Stormpaw, who was still asleep. Darkness covered his vision. *I guess things* will *be better in the morning.*

Sharppaw padded into camp, placing his two mice and squirrel in the fresh-kill pile. He headed back to his mentor. "Ambertuft!" He called.

The dark ginger she-cat was talking with Ripplewind. Touching her nose to his, the creamy colored tom padded to the fresh-kill pile. She turned towards Sharppaw. "Yes?"

"Can I go out on my own?" Sharppaw asked.

"Oh I don't know," Ambertuft meowed. "There's been a kittypet hunting on our territory and he might attack a young cat like you."

Sharppaw bristled. *Is she doubting my fighting skills?* "I can fight off a stupid kittypet, I'll have you know!" He growled.

"Keep your fur on. Sure, you can go out, as long as you don't go too far," Ambertuft cationed, her tail flicking.

Sharppaw headed past her, padding into the forest. The ground was cold and puddles were frozen dirty water. The trees' branches creaked in the wind and leaves crunched under Sharppaw's paws as he padded over them. A half moon had passed since Squirrelstar's chat with him. He had felt better, trying to forget about Fluffypelt, and trying to get used to Lightpaw ignoring him. Now he felt as though Lightpaw was just a friend of his. Stormpaw was beginning to feel like actual family.

A yowl interrupted his thoughts. Lashing his tail, he crept through the undergrowth. Kittypet scent flooded his jaws suddenly.

A sleek-furred black kittypet with tufted ears and amber eyes was creeping through the undergrowth. He had a long tail with a white

stripe. He seemed to have some badger-like pattern. The kittypet was quite large.

The kittypet suddenly lunged forward, his claws outstretched. A vole suddenly scuttled from the undergrowth, heading towards Sharppaw. Out of sight, he darted forward quickly and killed the small creature. He hid it in a clump of ferns. *Is this the kittypet Ambertuft was talking about? He can't even hunt!*

The kittypet lashed his tail in frustration and crept from the undergrowth, padding away from Sharppaw, his ears pricked. Sharppaw decided to follow the kittypet.

Hauling himself up a fence, Sharppaw spotted the kittypet padding towards the entrance to the twoleg nest. "Hey!" Sharppaw hissed.

The kittypet swung around, bristling. He glared at Sharppaw, his tail lashing.

Trying to remain calm, Sharppaw jumped off the fence, narrowing his eyes as he glanced at the kittypet. "Can you tell me what you were doing on ThunderClan territory?" He asked.

"Oh, that was Clan territory?" The kittypet mocked.

"And I'm Sharppaw of ThunderClan and I caught you trespassing. Answer my question," Sharppaw growled, curling his lip.

The kittypet stalked towards Sharppaw, unsheathing his claws.

Sharppaw then unsheathed his claws, a growl rumbling in his throat.

"Why should I tell *you*, Clan cat?" The kittypet growled. He sighed. "Well, I'm Arbonx."

"Well then, *Arbonx*, I just have to tell you that you're a terrible hunter!" Sharppaw mocked, flicking his ears. His whiskers twitched as the kittypet flattened his ears.

The kittypet lunged forward, pressing against Sharppaw. His fluffy fur rubbed against Sharppaw's nose and mouth, and for a second he

couldn't breath.

Struggling with all his might, Sharppaw kicked the heavy tom off of him. He leaped on Arbonx and raised a paw, his heart pounding.

Arbonx looked at him with round, pleading eyes. "Ok, ok, I swear I made a mistake by hunting in your territory!" He mewed like a kit.

Sharppaw hesitated. He's learned his lesson... Suddenly a faded dark gray tom appeared beside him. Dark mist swirled around the tom, writhing around his paws. His thin amber gaze fixed on Arbonx. He curled his tail around round Sharppaw's shoulders. "Kill him," he whispered.

Sharppaw knew this cat. It was Wolffang, the cat who would train with him in his dreams. Sharppaw looked at him, shaking. His icy gaze made his stiffen more. Turning back to Arbonx, he extended his claws and lashed out with his paw, striking Arbonx's throat.

The black tom yowled with pain and terror. He looked down at the gash in his throat with wide eyes. Blood trickled from his mouth and spilled from the gash and stained his white chest fur. He started making a horrible choking sound. Satisfaction surged through Sharppaw.

Then, the entrance to the twoleg nest opened, and four twolegs came out: a male twoleg, a female twoleg, and two young twolegs. They let out gasps of horror as they saw Sharppaw with his blood-stained paw and their kittypet jerking wildly on the ground, blood gushing from his throat.

Then the twolegs yowled in anger. One of the young twolegs picked up something and hurled it at Sharppaw. He darted to the fence, avoiding the object just in time. He clawed up the fence and hurled himself on the other side. After a moment's hesitation, Sharppaw quietly climbed back up the fence, looking at the twolegs once more.

The female twoleg was holding Arbonx in her arms while whimpering with grief. Blood stained her and blood was pooled in the grass. Arbonx then let out a low yowl and fell limp in the

twoleg's arms, blood still streaming from the gash. Sharppaw swung around, jumping off the fence, and headed for the stream.

Chapter 16

"Let all cats old enough to hunt join beneath the High-Rock for a Clan meeting!" Squirrelstar called.

Finally! Tonight's the gathering! Will she choose me? Sharppaw hurriedly ran forward to join Stormpaw, who was already waiting. Stormpaw purred as he neared her.

"I wonder if we can both go," Stormpaw admitted. "I hope so."

"I hope too," Sharppaw meowed, leaning against her. "I wonder how the leaders will react when they hear about the rogues!" He meowed.

Stormpaw curled her tail around her paws. "Lets hear who gets to go, then."

"Now, as you all know, the gathering is tonight. I'll choose now," Squirrelstar announced, her tail flicking. "Mossheart, Whitewing, Ambertuft, Sharppaw, Stormpaw, Smallfeather, Ripplewind, Cloudspark, and Echostrike."

Sharppaw felt Stormpaw jump up beside him, her eyes lighting up. "Finally, my first gathering!" She purred.

Sharppaw followed her to the camp entrance, his tail lifting. "This is my second gathering now," he meowed.

They talked quietly the whole way until they reached the stream where the ThunderClan border ended. The stream was large, but wasn't deep. They crossed the stream easily, since some parts were frozen and stable to walk on. The large blossom tree, which had no blossoms now, stood tall, its branching stretching in the black sky.

They padded across the sandy clearing and finally reached the tree. They were surprisingly the first Clan to arrive.

Squirrelstar clawed her way up the tree, sitting on the branch of the tree.

The quiet gurgle of the stream made Sharppaw want to sleep. On the other side of the tree, there was less ground. It slightly dipped a little, where the river was. On the other side of the river was RiverClan territory.

The reeds suddenly rustled and Flowerstar padded out. Reedwhisker followed her, along with Mothwing, Willowshine, and Sapbriar. Rust, Mallownose, Petalfur, Pineshade, Lizardtail, and Iceriver followed them.

Flowerstar took her place in the tree, while Reedwhisker joined Ivypool at the bottom of the tree. The other medicine cats padded over to where Mothstripe, Twistedfoot, and Flamedawn were sitting by the stream.

Then Tigerstar came from the darkness, leaping over the stream. Tawnypelt, Ravenbreeze, Dawnpelt, Strikestone, Berryheart, Juniperclaw, Crowpaw, and a sleek light gray tom were following close behind.

"I wonder when WindClan will arive," Stormpaw murmured.

"Their territory is farthest from the gathering place," Sharppaw pointed out. He watched as Tigerstar took his place in the Great Blossom Tree, his amber eyes shining.

"I know," Stormpaw meowed, her tail curling around her paws.

Finally, WindClan scent washed around them. Gorsestar padded from the darkness. Doveclaw, Rabbittail, Antpelt, Larkwing, Flashpaw, and Sparkpaw followed. Gorsestar heaved himself up the tree, panting. His movements were slow.

"Everything ok, Gorsestar?" Squirrelstar asked, her tail flicking with worry.

"Everything's ok. Just a little tired," Gorsestar growled, flicking his tail. He lifted his chin. "Ok, are we ready to-" he suddenly broke off with a cough.

Rabbittail glanced up in the tree, his eyes rounding with worry. "You're sick, Gorsestar. I told you that you shouldn't of come to the gathering," he sighed.

"He insisted on coming no matter what," Doveclaw meowed, flicking her tail.

"And I suppose you'd rather be up here addressing the Clan?" Gorsestar retorted. He lifted his chin. "Are we going to start the gathering?" He asked.

"I'll start first," Tigerstar meowed, dipping his head. "Leaf-bare has been harsh so far, but we're surviving. We recently lost one of our apprentices, Frogpaw, to the sickness, and Littlecloud and Beenose have come down with it as well. Strangely our medicine cat cannot treat this cough. Catmint doesn't seem to work and they get worse with every day," Tigerstar murmured. He turned to Squirrelstar. "Squirrelstar, do you think you could send one of your medicine cats to stay with my cats for a while?" He asked.

"I don't know. I'll think about it," Squirrelstar murmured.

"You don't say. We have sickness in our Clan too. Whitetail, Sparkpaw, Featherpelt, and Thornstem have all come down with this sickness. Kestrelflight stayed home to try and treat them," Gorsestar meowed.

"And you seem sick as well," Flowerstar pointed out, her green eyes flashing.

Squirrelstar lifted her chin. "Tigerstar? Have any more news left?" She asked.

"Yes. About a half moon ago, Shrewfoot gave birth to three healthy kits: Leafkit, Shadekit, and Adderkit," Tigerstar announced proudly. "And a loner named Sky recently joined our Clan," he added, then sat back down, dipping his head to Gorsestar.

Gorsestar weakly lifted his chin. "And Windflower also had three healthy kits: Ravenkit, Patchkit, and Cloudkit," he meowed. He dipped his head to Flowerstar.

"Not much news for us, except that the rogues have been coming onto our territory, taking our prey," Flowerstar meowed. "But we're still surviving with enough prey, and we still have our fish," she added, dipping her head to Squirrelstar.

Squirrelstar flicked her tail, her green gaze flashing. "Oh StarClan, where do I even start? Well, Darktail kidnapped Sharppaw, and we had to rescue him. We had a big battle. Three of our cats betrayed us, and Fluffypelt, Sootwing, and Smoky died," she murmured with grief?

"I'm sorry for your loses," Flowerstar murmured sympathetically.

"Who betrayed your Clan?" Tigerstar growled.

"Falconflight, Snowbreeze, and Frostpaw," Squirrelstar explained. She hung her head. "But I don't know why Falconflight and Snowbreeze betrayed us, I really don't. They'd been loyal to ThunderClan for moons and moons, and they were skilled fighters," she meowed lastly.

"They'll realize their mistake soon," Flowerstar insisted, flicking her tail.

Sharppaw was too drowned in his thoughts to hear what the other leaders were saying. *The only reason they left was because of me.* After what seemed like forever of staring at his paws, Stormpaw prodded him sharply in the side.

"Come on, lets go! The gathering is over," Stormpaw meowed. She looked closely at Sharppaw, her eyes clouded with worry. "Is everything ok?" She asked.

"What? Yeah," Sharppaw muttered. He got to his paws, following his Clanmates with Stormpaw at his side. Memories of him killing the kittypet flashed in his mind. He shook his head, trying or forget the awful moment. *I should do better...*

Chapter 17

Two moons had passed, and so had leaf-bare. The sun shone brightly in the blue sky, and Sharppaw had just returned from a hunting and fighting session. He'd fought with Lightpaw, and had won. He'd also caught more prey than his brother.

Sharppaw dropped his squirrel, sparrow, and shrew on the prey pile, feeling hungry himself. But first he would make sure the elders had been fed. Picking up a fat pigeon and a mouse, he headed across the camp towards the elders' den.

Flower and Thorn were chatting together, while Graystripe, Ferncloud, and Poppyfrost were sharing tongues together.

Sharppaw dropped the fat pigeon at Graystripe's paws. "Here. Share it with Ferncloud and Poppyfrost. You must be hungry," he meowed.

"Thanks, Sharppaw! I was starting to think we'd never get food!" Graystripe purred.

Sharppaw turned and gave Flower and Thorn the mouse. Thorn blinked gratefully at him with his one eye.

"Thank you, Sharppaw. I'm actually glad I joined ThunderClan instead of being with the rogues," Thorn meowed.

Sharppaw blinked warmly at him. Flicking his tail, he turned. Most of the warriors around the camp were eating prey, so Sharppaw headed to the pile and grabbed two mice.

Stormpaw padded into camp, Berrynose, Blossomfall, and Mossheart with her. Stormpaw was carrying a fat vole and a small blackbird. She trotted over to the fresh-kill pile, dropping her prey.

She spotted Sharppaw and padded over to him, her gaze warm. "Hi, Sharppaw!"

Sharppaw dropped his mice on the ground and leaned forward to lick Stormpaw's muzzle. "Are you hungry?" He asked.

"Yes," Stormpaw meowed, purring. She followed Sharppaw as they headed into a corner of the camp with the two mice. Sharppaw crouched down and took a bite of his mouse.

Stormpaw looked as though something were on her mind.

"Something wrong?" Sharppaw asked.

"I had a strange dream last night. Some StarClan cat came to me. He said his name was Ashstar and told me that I needed to find the last remaining of the storm," Stormpaw meowed. "Well, whatever that means."

Sharppaw stared at her, his heart starting to pound. Had she possibly received a prophecy? He flicked his tail. "Lets just eat," he meowed.

Sharppaw padded with Stormpaw and Stalkpaw through the forest, hearing the quiet gurgle of the stream close by. They'd been padding through the forest for a long time and then they'd smelled rogue scent and followed it. It must've been past the stream, leading to the gathering place.

Stalkpaw flicked his tail. "Why do the rogues have to be so much trouble," he growled. His neck fur was bristling.

"Good question," Stormpaw sighed. "They should know by now that if we found them on our territory, we'd kick their tails over the border," she pointed out.

Sharppaw brushed against her, his whiskers twitching. "Maybe they enjoy annoying us." *But I do know that Frostpaw, Falconflight, and Snowbreeze enjoy annoying* me.

The three cats leaped over the stream and peered through the tough reeds, keeping low.

A dark blueish-black she-cat with yellow eyes was with Nettle and Rain.

"We can make our territory here. Our camp can be here from now on," Rain meowed, his whiskers twitching. He looked at the mysterious she-cat. "Good thinking, Ninx. How did you know about this place?"

"I saw the Clan cats come here every full moon. They'll never know that we're here. Next full moon, we can ambush them here. We might be able to outnumber them. After all, they only bring a few of their cats with them," she meowed, her yellow eyes shining.

"This is good," Rain meowed smoothly. "Darktail will be pleased."

"Yes, and they will pay for killing Arbonx. I'm still expecting his kits, and they'll have to grow up without a father," Ninx meowed, her tail drooping.

"Don't worry, Ninx. We'll make them pay," Rain growled.

"We should go back to Darktail now," Nettle meowed. He flicked his tail.

Stalkpaw growled. "We should warn them off our territory," he insisted.

"We can't fight fully grown rogues!" Stormpaw gasped.

"We can if we try," Sharppaw pointed out, flicking his tail.

The undergrowth on the right rustled. A sleek white she-cat padded out, her blue eyes shimmering with menace.

Sharppaw bristled. "Ugh, it's that arrogant Frostpaw!" He hissed.

"Frostheart. Good to see you," Nettle greeted warmly.

Sharppaw lashed his tail. Had she given herself a warrior name already?

Frostheart ignored the tom. She glared at Ninx. "Have you done

anything useful for once?" She hissed.

Sharppaw sighed inwardly. And she's still got the same attitude...

Ninx glared back at her. "Of course I have. I have a plan," she meowed.

"But we should go back to Darktail," Nettle mewed, padding over to them.

"Huh, you can warn him, and we'll stay here," Frostheart growled. She parted her jaws, bristling. "The smell of ThunderClan is unusually strong," she murmured.

"Or maybe that's just you," Ninx hissed.

Frostheart suddenly lashed out, her claws catching Ninx on the cheek. Blood spattered the ground.

"You piece of dirt!" Ninx hissed. She reared on her paws, swiping at Frostheart. She caught her muzzle and lashed at her cheek.

"Stop fighting like kits!" Rain yowled, slashing at Frostheart's ear. The white she-cat staggered backwards.

"It's honestly unbelievable how you two act!" Rain sighed, lashing his tail. "Frostheart, stay with Nettle and guard this spot while I report to Darktail," he ordered. Ninx padded up to him and the two rogues left, their tails flicking.

Sharppaw turned to Stormpaw and Stalkpaw. "We should attack them now. We outnumber them."

"But even though we outnumber them, they might outskill us," Stalkpaw pointed out. "We event even completed our warrior training yet."

"It would be risky to attack them now," Stormpaw protested, flattening her ears.

"But this is the gathering place! This isn't rogue territory!" Sharppaw hissed. He got to his paws, unsheathing his claws and darting from

the undergrowth.

"Sharppaw! Come back, mouse-brain!" Stalkpaw yowled in terror.

"Sharppaw? What a surprise to see you here!" Frostheart growled, rising to her paws. She peered past him as Stormpaw and Stalkpaw crept from the undergrowth. "Oh and you've brought your friends here too! You can't even fight me alone, coward," she hissed.

Stormpaw bristled. "Sharppaw is not a coward!" She growled defensively.

"At least he has more loyalty than you'll ever have," Stalkpaw hissed.

"Oh stop all that nonsense talk," Frostheart retorted. She lashed her tail, looking at Nettle. "We can fight these weak cats."

Nettle padded forward, unsheathing his claws.

Sharppaw yowled and was about to leap on Frostheart, but the undergrowth behind him rustled. His heart froze. Were more rogues coming?

Bramblehawk and Lightpaw padded from the bushes.

"What's happening?" Bramblehawk asked, narrowing his eyes. The brown tabby senior warrior looked at the rogues.

"The rogues were on this territory," Sharppaw hissed. "I was about to attack when suddenly you two showed up."

Bramblehawk bristled, unsheathing his claws. "Well? Do you two need a fight to prove who's stronger, or will you leave now?"

Frostheart curled her tail in annoyance. "Fine," she growled. She surprisingly left with Nettle without another word.

"Who's the coward now?" Sharppaw mocked, satisfaction scorching through him.

"Sharppaw, that's enough," Bramblehawk meowed. "We best get off

this territory." As the five cats padded from the territory, Lightpaw blinked sadly at Sharppaw.

"Frostpaw is one of them now," he muttered.

"Well thank StarClan she is," Sharppaw growled. "She doesn't even feel like a sister anymore, and she's already given herself a warrior name: Frostheart."

"She's still a sister to me," Lightpaw whispered. "Even if she isn't to you."

Sharppaw ignored his brother. He hunched his shoulders, feeling more empty inside.

"We were coming to look for you, Sharppaw. Ambertuft needed to see you," Bramblehawk meowed. Turning a warm gaze on him, he added, "It's something important."

Chapter 18

This was the happiest Sharppaw had felt in days and in moons. He was finally going to have his warrior assessment, along with Lightpaw. *I wish Fluffypelt was here.*

Stormpaw, Stalkpaw, and Monarchpaw wouldn't be having their assessment until next half-moon, but it was still pretty exciting.

Ambertuft's mew snapped him back into reality. "Ok, Sharppaw. It's time for you to catch as much prey as you can," she meowed. "And remember, I'll be watching you the whole time, so do your absolute best." As she padded away, Sharppaw stalked into the undergrowth, keeping low.

Vole washed Sharppaw's jaws, and he quickly darted forward into a clump of ferns, later emerging quickly with the small creature in his jaws. He dug a shallow hole in the ground and dropped the prey there, covering it up. He crept forward again, hoping that Ambertuft had seen that catch.

Sharppaw could smell squirrel, and, creeping forward more, he spotted the fluffy ginger creature poking at a nut. Its fluffy tail flicked.

Sharppaw crept forward, but didn't see the twig under his paw. It cracked and the squirrel perked up, fear-scent drifting from it. Quickly, Sharppaw darted forward. The squirrel climbed the tree

and Sharppaw climbed up after it. He swiped at its tail, making it lose its balance on the tree. The squirrel then twisted from his paws and fell to the ground, trying to limp away from the tree.

Sharppaw jumped down and bit into the squirrel's neck, killing it. He buried the squirrel and pricked his ears, looking up as he heard a crack above him. Was that Ambertuft watching him?

Shaking his thoughts away, Sharppaw could smell thrush. He then scented kittypet as well. Holding back a sigh, he crept forward. He saw a black kittypet sitting by a tree. Bristling, he crept forward.

"What are you doing on ThunderClan territory?" Sharppaw hissed.

The black kittypet looked up, fear glimmering in his eyes. "I-I'm sorry. I didn't know this was Clan territory! I'll back off now!" He whimpered.

"Why are you so scared?" Sharppaw asked.

"Because some Clan cat slaughtered Arbonx a few moons ago. He was one of my friends and I miss him so much," the black tom meowed. "My name is Lucky."

Sharppaw instantly felt grief flood over him. He tried to not make it seem like he was the one who had killed Arbonx. "Well, I'm sorry for you. But get off ThunderClan territory now, or you won't be able to avoid injury," he hissed.

Lucky turned away and ran through the undergrowth.

Sharppaw bristled. *That kittypet scared off all the prey surely with all that noise!* He resisted the urge to find the kittypet and claw his ears. Sharppaw spotted the thrush that he'd smelled earlier sitting on a branch. It was sleeping with three baby thrushes.

Grief and pain stabbed Sharppaw in the chest like a large claw. He felt breath tighten. Looking at that family of thrushes, he was reminded of Fluffypelt nursing him, Lightpaw, and Frostheart as small kits. He shook the thoughts from his head. *I can't kill them, I can't do it....*

Sharppaw turned away from the tree away crept through the undergrowth.

Sharppaw was returning back to camp, two mice and a squirrel in his mouth. He'd have to make a second trip to get the vole and sparrow that he'd caught. He wondered where Ambertuft was.

Suddenly, a pale yellow flash fell from the tree. *Lightpaw!*

Sharppaw jumped back, startled. Lightpaw suddenly darted forward, lashing at Sharppaw's ears.

Sharppaw avoided the blow. "What are you doing?" He hissed, dropping the prey.

"A practice battle, duh!" Lightpaw meowed. He reared and slammed his paws down hard on Sharppaw's head, making him stumble.

Sharppaw kicked out with a hind paw as Lightpaw darted towards him. His brother landed on his side, hissing as Sharppaw grabbed his scruff, panting. He heaved the tom away and slammed a paw hard on his shoulder.

Lightpaw slipped and lashed out as he staggered, catching Sharppaw's muzzle. Sharppaw flinched back as he aimed for his ears, then darted forward. He swiped one paw at Lightpaw's shoulder, then struck Lightpaw's chest, knocking him over. He leaped on his brother, pinning him down. "Give up?" He hissed. Suddenly, he felt Lightpaw's hind paws start to pummel his belly. Sharppaw leaped on his brother and quickly shoved him onto his side, grabbing his scruff again.

Sharppaw heaved his brother onto his belly and leaped on his shoulders. Sharppaw placed a paw on Lightpaw's head.

"Great job!" A loud meow sounded behind Sharppaw.

Ambertuft and Bramblehawk padded from the undergrowth, their eyes warm.

"You both did great," Ambertuft meowed, flicking her tail at Sharppaw. "You can stop now."

Sharppaw backed off of Lightpaw. He watched as his brother rose to his paws, shaking out his pelt. He was panting. "Where's your prey?" He asked.

"I already returned it to camp," Lightpaw explained.

"And I took your vole and sparrow back to camp," Ambertuft meowed to Sharppaw. "I saw how you dealt with that kittypet. Good job," she praised.

Sharppaw's pelt felt hot with embarrassment. "Did I pass my assessment?" He asked.

"Yes," Ambertuft purred.

"Both of you," Bramblehawk meowed.

"I'll take the rest of your prey to camp, Sharppaw. You two can get yourselves cleaned up for the ceremony," Ambertuft meowed. "Bramblehawk, go tell Squirrelstar about their assessments."

"Sharppaw and Lightpaw, come forward," Squirrelstar meowed, her green gaze warm.

Sharppaw padded forward, his chin high, Lightpaw at his side.

"I, Squirrelstar, leader of ThunderClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these apprentices. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you a warrior in their turn," Squirrelstar meowed, lifting her chin.

Sharppaw felt his chest tighten. It was finally happening. Then he spotted a slightly faded cat standing by Squirrelstar. It was Fluffypelt. Her blue eyes shone.

Squirrelstar leaned forward. "Sharppaw, Lightpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?" She asked.

"I do," Sharppaw meowed bravely, lifting his tail.

Lightpaw leaned forward. "I do."

Squirrelstar blinked warmly at them. "Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior names. Sharppaw, from this moment on you will be known as Sharptalon. StarClan honors your courage and skill in battle, and we welcome you as a full warrior of ThunderClan," Squirrelstar meowed, her voice clear. She jumped off the High-Rock, leaning forward to rest her chin on Sharptalon's head.

Sharptalon licked her shoulder in return.

Squirrelstar turned towards Lightpaw. "Lightpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Lighttail. StarClan honors your bravery and determination, and we welcome you as a full warrior of ThunderClan," Squirrelstar meowed, leaning forward to rest her chin on Lighttail's head. He licked her shoulder.

"Sharptalon! Lighttail! Sharptalon! Lighttail!" The Clan cheered.

Sharptalon and Lighttail padded towards the fresh-kill pile after the cheering was over. Stormpaw and Monarchpaw rushed over.

"Great job, Sharptalon!" Stormpaw purred. She licked Sharptalon's shoulder, purring loudly.

"Soon it will be your turn," Sharptalon purred, resting his tail on Stormpaw's shoulder.

"I think I was the only one calling your name the loudest!" Stormpaw meowed.

Ambertuft padded over. She licked Sharptalon's ear. "I'm proud of you and your brother. Your determination, your courage, your skill in battle. I honestly thought you'd never pull through Fluffypelt's death, but you made it, and now look how far you've come. You're a strong warrior, Sharptalon," she purred.

"Well t-thank you! I never thought into hear that come from my mentor!" Sharptalon admitted.

"Any time," Ambertuft purred, blinking warmly at him. "Don't forget

that you have to sit vigil," she reminded.

"I know," Sharptalon meowed. He glanced up at the sky. It was getting dark. "It's close to night," he murmured.

"Stormpaw!" Berrynose called. "We need to do some hunting. Come on," Berrynose meowed.

Smallfeather padded from the crowd, coming to stand to beside the cream-colored warrior. "You too, Monarchpaw."

"Aw, but do I have to go? I wanted to praise Lighttail," Monarchpaw protested.

"You can praise him when we get back. Lets go," Smallfeather meowed.

Sharptalon glanced at Lighttail. "Lets eat."

The moon hung in the sky, shimmering brightly. Sharptalon looked at Lighttail. "I wonder if Fluffypelt is happy," Lighttail muttered.

"Of course she is. Why wouldn't she be?" Sharptalon whispered. "We should be quiet."

As Lighttail turned away, hunching his shoulders and pricking his ears, Sharptalon couldn't help but let his thoughts wonder.

I still wonder what Fluffypelt meant by not being able to change my destiny...

Chapter 19

The sun shimmered brightly in the sky, casting down pools of light around camp. Five moons had passed. The rogues hadn't attacked any other Clan so far, and prey was running good.

Sharptalon lay beside Stormgaze. She'd earned her warrior name four moons ago along with her siblings, Stalkfire and Monarchwing.

But now ThunderClan was short on apprentices. They only had two at the moment: Beechpaw and Rookpaw, the sons of Palewhisker and Breezestorm. Ambertuft had given birth to Ripplewind's kits, and Phoenixwing had moved to the nursery.

"Tonight is the gathering," Stormgaze breathed, leaning closer to Sharptalon.

"I hope we are both chosen," Sharptalon purred. "Squirrelstar has a lot to announce."

Lighttail padded over suddenly, his eyes shimmering brightly. Monarchwing padded by his side, her eyes warm.

"Sharptalon!" Lighttail purred, swishing his tail.

"Yes?" Sharptalon prompted, confused. Why was his brother so happy?

"Monarchwing is expecting my kits," He purred. He nuzzled his mate's shoulder with affection.

"Great StarClan, already, Lighttail?" Sharptalon asked. "Well either

way, I'm happy for you. Congratulations."

"Thank you," Lighttail purred. He looked at Monarchwing. "Can you please move into the nursery? I'm worried you'll get hurt," he admitted.

"What? Don't worry, Lighttail. Patrolling borders and hunting isn't even going to hurt me!" Monarchwing meowed, playfully nudging Lighttail's shoulder.

Worry clouded Stormgaze's gaze. "What about Stalkfire? I want him to be happy with a mate too."

Sharptalon turned to her, blinking. "Don't worry. Your brother will be fine."

Stormgaze glanced at him, saying nothing. She sat up, curling her tail around her paws.

Squirrelstar padded from her den on High-Ledge. "Ivypool!" She called.

Sharptalon glanced up, his whiskers twitching.

Ivypool hurried from where she was standing by the camp entrance, and ran up to Squirrelstar.

"Yes?" She asked.

"We need to start sending more patrols out by the rogue's border," Squirrelstar meowed. She caught Sharptalon's eye. "Sharptalon!" She called.

Sharptalon sat up, pricking his ears.

"I need you to patrol ShadowClan's border with Stormgaze and Lighttail," she meowed. "Monarchwing, go with Ivypool to find some of our other Clanmates."

Sharptalon glanced at Stormgaze and Lighttail. "At least we have something to do."

Sharptalon marked the ThunderClan border and parted his jaws, tasting a strange scent he'd never smelt before. He heard hushed voices on the other side of the grass where the gathering place was. The quiet gurgle of the stream hummed in his ears.

Sharptalon padded forward, but before he could, two cats padded out, both of them looking half-starved. A brown tabby she-cat with amber eyes and a white chest with white paws was standing next to a light brown tabby tom with amber eyes.

"Who are you?" The light brown tabby tom bristled, glaring at Sharptalon.

"I've got the same question," Sharptalon growled, flattening his ears.

Stormgaze and Lighttail came running over, bristling. "Who are they?" Lighttail hissed, narrowing his eyes.

"I am Leafpool," the brown tabby she-cat meowed. She dipped her head. "And this is Birchfall. I'm sorry for... intruding. But I thought I smelled ThunderClan."

Sharptalon narrowed his eyes. "Well darn right you smelled ThunderClan, and you are intruding."

Birchfall stepped closer to Leafpool protectively. "Don't attack her, she's a medicine cat!" He hissed. He looked down with uneasiness. "But she's also expecting."

"I'm sorry for Sharptalon's rudeness, Birchfall, Leafpool. We are ThunderClan. Are you missing warriors or something?" Lighttail asked.

Sharptalon sighed. "Stormgaze, go to camp and get Squirrelstar, we should-"

Leafpool suddenly gasped. "Squirrelstar!?"

"Was she Squirrelflight before?" Birchfall asked.

"Yes," Lighttail meowed. "I was born when she was still leader, but I know her warrior name. Why, is she important to you?"

"Squirrelflight-- no, Squirrelstar-- is my sister!" Leafpool gasped. "Oh StarClan! Is she ok? What about Alderheart? Are they ok?" She asked.

Sharptalon blinked at her. "Alderheart's dead. I'm not sure what he was like, but my mother told me and my siblings of how he died protecting Ashstar."

"Oh no, I'm sorry," Leafpool murmured. She blinked at them.

"What about Ivypool and Whitewing?" Birchfall gasped. "Are they ok?"

"Ivypool is deputy and Whitewing is doing fine," Lighttail meowed.

"Thank StarClan! I'm so glad to hear!" Birchfall purred. "I'm Ivypool's father by the way, and Whitewing is my mate. But how are Firekit and Fluffykit doing?"

"You mean Fluffypelt and Firestorm?" Lighttail's mew cracked.

Birchfall's eyes flashed with concern. "Are those their warrior names? That's great. How is Fluffypelt? How is Firestorm?"

"Well um Fluffypelt is..." Sharpton trailed off.

"Is our mother," Lighttail finished.

Birchfall's eyes lit up with joy. "Oh it's so nice to know I have more kin!" He purred.

"But.... Fluffypelt is dead. She died protecting me from rogues," Sharptalon sighed with grief. He wanted to change the subject.

"Oh no... no... I'm... so sorry," Birchfall murmured. "I only knew her as a kit, but I miss her even more now."

"I'm sorry, but it happens," Leafpool meowed, flashing a sympathetic look at Sharptalon.

The bushes rustled behind them. Stormgaze and Squirrelstar padded from the undergrowth. Squirrelstar then gasped as she saw

Leafpool. She rushed forward and Sharptalon could hear her loud purring. Squirrelstar shoved her muzzle in her sister's neck fur, holding her close. "Oh sister, it's so good to see you again!"

Leafpool winded around her sister, purring loudly.

"I thought you were dead! I thought Ashstar killed you!" Squirrelstar whimpered.

"He didn't. After he killed Firestar, I knew I had to run away. I'm sorry I left you behind, Squirrelstar, I really am. But I'm with a group. Sparkpelt is here too," Leafpool purred.

"Sparkpelt? My daughter!" Squirrelstar gasped. "I thought Ashstar killed her."

"I found her while I was trying to survive. I raised her good. She's back at our temporary camp," Leafpool purred.

Squirrelstar purred with joy. "Thank you. You're the best sister anyone could have." Then she looked down. "Are you.... expecting?"

"I'm sorry, but yes. They're Crowfeather's... again," Leafpool meowed guiltily.

Squirrelstar's whiskers twitched. "Leafpool, why... what?" She murmured. "But you're a medicine cat!"

"I know. I'm sorry. But being with this group... *SunClan*... Oh Squirrelstar, there are so many *real* Clan cats there. WindClan, RiverClan, and ShadowClan cats. They're alive," Leafpool meowed.

Squirrelstar twitched her whiskers. "Then take me to your camp, wherever it is."

Sharptalon padded beside Stormgaze as they padded past the reeds and rushes. Apparently these cats had set up their camp in the *gathering place* three days ago.

A flame-colored tom raced up to them, his bright blue eyes shining. He bristled as he saw Sharptalon, Stormgaze, and Lighttail.

"Leafpool, what did you bring back, exactly?" The tom asked. He widened his eyes as he saw Squirrelstar. "Squirrelflight!" He gasped. "It's good to see a familiar face."

Squirrelstar dipped her head. "I am Squirrelstar now. Flamepaw, it's nice to see you. Although I thought you were dead."

"I'm Flametail now," The flame-colored tom corrected. "I really want to know how the Clans are doing, but right now, I need to wait for every patrol to get back. They'll want to know about this," Flametail meowed.

A tortoiseshell she-cat with a dull white chest padded from nest of reeds. "Flametail?" She asked.

"Wait, Turtlepaw," Flametail meowed.

"Um well, by the way. You made your camp on the gathering place. That big blossom tree is where the leaders sit at our gatherings," Squirrelstar meowed awkwardly.

Flametail dipped his head. "I'm sorry, I didn't know."

The reeds rustled behind them. Sharptalon turned, seeing a russet-brown tom with green eyes lead a dark smoky, almost black tom with blue eyes into camp. They leaped the stream. A dark brown tabby tom followed them along with a large brown tabby tom.

Leafpool rushed forward, rubbing her muzzle along the dark-smoky tom's shoulder. "Crowfeather! My sister is here!" She gasped.

Sharptalon blinked. So that was Crowfeather. Who were the other cats with him?

Squirrelstar turned. "It's good to see you Crowfeather," she purred, dipping her head kindly. She glanced past him, gasping as she saw the russet-brown tom. The tom's green eyes lit up.

"Foxleap!" Squirrelstar purred. "I thought you were dead, but it's good to see you. Who is with you?" She asked.

Foxleap flicked his tail to the large brown tabby tom. "That's

Sparrowtail. He's from ShadowClan." He then pointed to the dark brown tabby tom. "And that's Hollowflight from RiverClan."

Flametail padded forward. "Cats of SunClan!" He yowled. "I have an important announcement to make! We have found ThunderClan!" He meowed proudly.

Every cat exchanged happy glances. They yowled with delight.

Sharptalon felt the gaze of a flame-colored tabby she-cat burning his pelt. He turned to see her. Squirrelstar then raced forward. "Sparkpelt!" She gasped.

"Squirrelflight!" The she-cat cried. "I thought I'd never see you again!"

"I'm Squirrelstar now," Squirrelstar purred. "I'm so glad you're alive!"

Suddenly, the reeds parted and Juniperclaw, Strikestone, and Ebonyfur leaped over the stream, bristling. "What's going on here? What's with all the yowling?!"

Squirrelstar padded forward towards them, her tail high. "We've found... everyone."

Allegiances 3

ThunderClan:

Leader: Squirrelstar- Dark ginger she-cat with green eyes and a white paw

Deputy: Ivypool- Silver-gray tabby she-cat

Medicine cats:

Mothstripe- Pretty golden tabby she-cat with a long, fluffy tail

Twistedfoot- Brown tom with a twisted paw and green eyes

Flamedawn- Dark ginger tom with blue eyes and white paws

Warriors:

Jaywing- Gray tabby she-cat with blue eyes and a torn ear, apprentice- Beechpaw

Mossheart- Black and silver she-cat with green eyes

Foxleap- reddish-brown tabby tom with green eyes

Rosepetal- Dark cream she-cat

Toadstep- Black and white tom

Sparkpelt- Flame-colored tabby she-cat with green eyes

Birchfall- Light brown tabby tom with amber eyes

Brackenclaw- White she-cat with golden splotches

Molefur- Dark cream tom with brown paws

Whitewing- Small snowy white she-cat with green eyes

Berrynose- Cream colored tom with a thick, short stump for a tail

Blossomfall- Tortoiseshell and white she-cat with petal-shaped white patches

Crowfeather- Dark-smoky, almost black tom with blue eyes, formerly WindClan

Bramblehawk- Dark brown tom with black stripes and yellow eyes

Firestorm- Fire-colored tom with blue eyes and a gray ear-tip

Thistlepatch- Gray and white she-cat with strange violet eyes

Willowbrook- Gray and white tabby she-cat

Moonshine- Black and silver-white she-cat, apprentice- Rookpaw

Palewhisker- Black and white she-cat

Smallfeather- Pale yellow small tom with blue eyes

Breezestorm- White tom with gray paws

Ripplewind- Cream-white tom with a dark mask-like pattern around his eyes

Hawkfoot- Muscular brown tabby tom with amber eyes

Cloudspark- Fluffy white she-cat with yellow eyes and a torn ear

Mistfang- Dark gray tom with green eyes and a silver chest and paws, formerly rogue

Cherryflight- Dark ginger she-cat with amber eyes and gray spots

and white paws, formerly rogue

Petal- Ginger she-cat with green eyes and white petal-shaped spots on her back, formerly rogue

Echostrike- Pale brown she-cat with green eyes and a white paw

Lighttail- Pale yellow tom with a long tail and yellow eyes

Sharptalon- Large brown tom with a thick-tail and amber eyes and a torn ear

Stalkfire- Broad-shouldered, tufty-furred, flame-colored tom with green eyes

Stormgaze- Gray tabby she-cat with beautiful green eyes

Apprentices:

Beechpaw- Pale golden-cream tabby tom

Rookpaw- Very dark gray tom with blue eyes

Queens:

Coriander- Tortoiseshell and white she-cat with amber eyes (Nursery helper)

Monarchwing- Small tortoiseshell she-cat dappled with white (Expecting Lighttail's kits)

Leafpool- Brown tabby she-cat with a white chest and paws and amber eyes, former medicine cat (Expecting Crowfeather's kits)

Ambertuft- Dark ginger she-cat with green eyes (Mother to Ripplewind's kits: Blazekit, Sootkit, and Needlekit)

Phoenixwing- Slender, long-legged flame-colored she-cat with green eyes (Expecting Hawkfoot's kits)

Elders:

Thorn- Golden tabby tom with scratches across his face, blind in

one eye

Purdy- Mottled, dark brown tabby tom

Graystripe- Gray tom with a darker gray stripe

Ferncloud- Gray she-cat with green eyes

Flower- Very old cream-white she-cat

Poppyfrost- Dappled, pale tortoiseshell and white she-cat with a small stub for a tail

WindClan:

Leader: Gorsestar- Mottled pale gray tabby tom with blue eyes, apprentice- Patchpaw

Deputy: Doveclaw- Gray she-cat with white paws and blue eyes and a torn ear

Medicine cats:

Kestrelflight- Gray tom with white splotches

Rabbittail- Light brown tom with green eyes and a short tail

Warriors:

Eaglefeather- Golden tom with green eyes and a scarred muzzle, apprentice- Cloudpaw

Antpelt- Lithe brown tom with one black ear

Breezepelt- Black tom with amber eyes

Heathertail- Light brown tabby she-cat with heather-blue eyes

Sunstrike- Tortoiseshell she-cat with a large white mark on her forehead

Swallowtail- Dark gray she-cat

Boulderfur- Large pale gray tom

Larkwing- Pale brown tabby she-cat, apprentice- Ravenpaw

Sedgewhisker- Light brown tabby she-cat

Slightfoot- Black tom with a flash of white on his chest

Thornstem- Gold-brown tom with golden eyes

Windflower- Small light brown tabby she-cat

Smokehaze- Gray she-cat

Brindlewing- Mottled brown she-cat

Flashfire- Dark ginger-brown tabby tom with amber eyes and white splotches, formerly rogue

Sparkfur- Spiky-furred ginger she-cat with green eyes, formerly rogue

Apprentices:

Ravenpaw- Black tom with white ears

Patchpaw- White she-cat patched with splotches of gold and black

Cloudpaw- Light brown tabby tom

RiverClan:

Leader: Flowerstar- Tortoiseshell and white she-cat with green eyes

Deputy: Reedwhisker- Slender black tom

Medicine cats:

Mothwing- Dappled dark golden she-cat

Willowshine- Sleek thick-furred dark gray tabby she-cat

Sapbriar- Milky-white she-cat with gray paws

Warriors:

Mistyfoot- Blue-gray she-cat with blue eyes

Rust- Large dark brown tom with amber eyes

Mintfur- Light gray tabby tom, apprentice- Breezepaw

Icewing- White she-cat with blue eyes, apprentice- Nightpaw

Lakeheart- Gray tabby she-cat

Pebblefoot- Mottled pale gray tom

Rushtail- Light brown tabby tom

Hollowflight- Dark brown tabby tom

Pineshade- Dark ginger tom with a black splotch on his back

Podlight- Sturdy gray and white tom

Mallownose- Light brown tom

Petalfur- Gray and white she-cat with amber eyes

Lizardtail- Light brown tom

Beetleshell- Black tom with brown paws

Iceriver- Fluffy white she-cat with ice-blue eyes

Brackenpelt- Tortoiseshell she-cat

Owlnose- Brown tabby tom

Jayclaw- Gray tom

Queens:

Curlfeather- Pale brown she-cat (Mother to Pineshade's kits: Briarkit, Dawnkit, and Alderkit)

Brightmorning- White she-cat with blue eyes (Mother to Jayclaw's kits: Pigeonkit and Flintkit)

Elders:

Duskpelt- Brown tabby she-cat

ShadowClan:

Leader: Tigerstar- Big dark tiger-striped tabby tom with amber eyes and a torn ear

Deputy: Tawnypelt- Pale tortoiseshell she-cat

Medicine cat:

Flametail- Flame-colored tom with blue eyes, apprentice- Turtlepaw

Ravenbreeze- Small black she-cat

Warriors:

Ebonyfur- Black tom with green eyes, apprentice- Adderpaw

Dawnpelt- Cream-furred she-cat

Scorchfur- Dark gray tom, apprentice- Skypaw

Applefur- Mottled brown she-cat

Sparrowtail- Large brown tabby tom

Ferretclaw- Cream and gray tom, apprentice- Needlepaw

Spikefur- Dark brown tom with tufty fur on his head, apprentice- Darkpaw

Stonewing- White tom

Strikestone- Brown-striped tabby tom

Shrewfoot- Gray she-cat with black feet

Beenose- White she-cat with black ears, apprentice- Leafpaw

Yarrowleaf- Ginger she-cat with yellow eyes

Berryheart- Black and white she-cat

Juniperclaw- Sleek black tom, apprentice- Shadepaw

Crowclaw- Black tom with yellow eyes

Smoketail- Dark gray tabby she-cat with bright green eyes

Apprentices:

Needlepaw- Silver-gray she-cat with green eyes and a white chest

Darkpaw- Ginger tom dappled with black flecks

Turtlepaw- Small tortoiseshell she-cat with a dull white chest

Skypaw- Sleek, light gray tom, formerly loner

Leafpaw- Brown tabby she-cat with black paws

Shadepaw- Dark gray she-cat

Adderpaw- Dark brown tabby tom with a pale gray underbelly

Queens:

Snowbird- Pure white she-cat (Expecting Scorchfur's kits)

Cloverfoot- Gray tabby she-cat (Mother to Ebonyfur's kits: Pebblekit and Nettlekit)

Pinenose- Black she-cat (Mother to Spikefur's kits: Puddlekit, Lionkit, Slatekit, and Birchkit)

Grassheart- Pale brown tabby she-cat (Mother to Stonewing's kits: Flowerkit, Whorlkit, and Snakekit)

Elders:

Smokefoot- Black tom

Kinkfur- Dark gray tabby she-cat with long fur that sticks out in all angles

Ratscar- Dark brown tom with a long scar across his back

Rogues/DarkClan:

Leader: Darktail- Big white tom with black spots around his blue eyes and a long black tail

Deputy: Rain- Long-furred gray tom with green eyes

Medicine cat: Arch- Brown tabby tom with a white belly and paws

Fighters/Hunters:

Crowfrost- Black and white tom

Redwillow- Mottled brown and ginger tom

Shimmer- Black and white she-cat

Moon- Silver she-cat

Nettle- Brown tabby tom with long, spiky fur

Raven- Long-furred black she-cat

Roach- Silver-gray tom

Snow- White she-cat

Gravel- Slender gray tom

Sleekwhisker- Golden she-cat with yellow eyes, training Stripe

Snake- Golden-brown she-cat with yellow-green eyes

Thistle- Muscular gray tom with blue eyes

Snowbreeze- White tom with blue eyes, formerly ThunderClan

Falconflight- Dark brown tom with green eyes, formerly ThunderClan

Stripe- Gray tabby tom

Reed- Brown tabby tom with green eyes

Minnow- Silver tabby she-cat

Frostheart- White she-cat with yellow eyes and a feathery tail, formerly ThunderClan

Ice Shadow- Large, broad-shouldered white tom with blue eyes and a black stripe above his nose

Embers- Small, mottled ginger tabby tom

Shredfang- Mottled ginger tom

Slateclaw- Dappled silver she-cat

Splotch- White she-cat with gray splotches

Dart- Lean black tom

Mothers:

Ninx- Lean, dark blueish-black she-cat with yellow eyes (Mother to Arbonx's kits: Tyran, Viper, and Badger)

Chapter 20

5 moons had passed since the discovery of lost Clanmates. Sharptalon walked into camp, Stormgaze at his side. They headed towards the prey pile. Dark gray clouds passed across the gloomy sky. Rain was on the way.

Stormgaze dropped her mouse and squirrel in the prey pile. Purring, she looked at Sharptalon, her green eyes warm.

Sharptalon dropped his prey in the fresh-kill pile. He twitched his whiskers. He looked at Stormgaze. "Rain is on the way. We should take shelter somewhere before it starts to come down."

As soon as Sharptalon finished his sentence, a drop of rain landed on his nose. He blinked. He padded beside Stormgaze as they headed for the warriors' den.

Suddenly a loud yowl rang out. Sharptalon turn, looking around. It sounded as if it come from the nursery. He looked at Stormgaze. "Stay here, I'll go see who that is," he meowed.

Stormgaze blinked at Sharptalon, but didn't protest.

Sharptalon raced forward. Was Leafpool or one of the other queens having her kits? He squeezed through the entrance.

Monarchwing was stretched out in her nest, her face twisted in pain. Leafpool was crouched over her. "Get one of your medicine cats!" She hissed.

"They aren't in camp, none of them!" Sharptalon meowed. He crouched down. "What can I do?"

"Go find a stick and get thyme from the medicine den!" Leafpool explained.

"I don't know what thyme looks like," Sharptalon admitted guiltily. Stormgaze's voice sounded outside the den, "I'll fetch a stick!"

"Watch over her, Sharptalon! I'll go and fetch thyme," Leafpool meowed, padding from the den.

Coriander padded over, her tail flicking. "Something is wrong!" She gasped.

"The.... kits!" Monarchwing screeched. "They're coming too early!" She mewed with pain.

Ambertuft and Phoenixwing padded up, their eyes clouded with concern. "Monarchwing, you're going to be okay!" They mewed.

Monarchwing's flanks convulsed, her eyes closing tight. She let out a loud yowl. "It hurts!"

"Sharptalon! Get Lighttail!" Monarchwing mewed, her gaze clouded with desperation. "Please, get your brother, I need him! I can't do this without him!"

Sharptalon stood still. He felt something stirring inside him. *Why should I care about helping the cat who blamed me for killing her father? She's hated me all her life!*

"Don't just stand there, you mouse-brai- Argh, ach!" Monarchwing's hiss turned into a painful yowl. She flattened her ears.

Leafpool padded into the den, herbs and a stick in her jaws. "Move! I need space!" She meowed quickly, shoving past Sharptalon. She huffed. "Lucky you have a medicine cat here."

"I thought you gave up your role as a medicine cat for Crowfeather just to be with him," Sharptalon pointed out.

Leafpool stared at him guiltily. She gave Monarchwing the stick. "Bite on this. It will help you from yowling so loud and will distract you from the pain.

Monarchwing looked at them, her eyes clouded with pain. "Sharptalon! Get Lighttail!" She pleaded.

"No! Lighttail doesn't have to be here!" Sharptalon hissed. "Why should I do it for *you*? You've blamed me all your life for killing

your father, when it was actually the rogues that killed him! All you ever want to do is-"

"Shut up! All of you!" Leafpool hissed, her tail lashing. "Stop acting like kits! Just shut up and give me some peace and quiet! I need to concentrate." Leafpool leaned down. "Monarchwing, bite on this stick."

Monarchwing grabbed the stick, then bit down on it. Sharptalon heard the wood splinter as she crunched her jaws down harder.

Leafpool stood over her, her amber eyes clouded with worry. "The first kit is coming! Push!" She ordered.

Monarchwing bit down on the stick harder, her yowls of pain slightly muffled. "I'm trying!" She hissed.

Suddenly something slid from beneath her tail. A small kit wrapped in a sack. Leafpool gasped.

Coriander rushed forward to her daughter. "Monarchwing!" She gasped. She looked at her daughter's new kit. She darted forward and began to lick the kit.

"No!" Leafpool's mew cracked. "He's dead."

"Dead? What do you mean 'dead'?" Monarchwing hissed, looking back at them.

Coriander gasped, her eyes clouded with pain. "No, no! I'm so sorry, Monarchwing!" She whimpered.

"There's another one coming," Leafpool announced. He crouched down.

Blazekit and Needlekit watched in horror. They were cuddling in the corner with their sister, Sootkit.

Blazekit looked up at his mother. "Ambertuft? What's going on? Is Mon... Monarchwing..dying?" He asked.

Ambertuft blinked sadly at her son. "No, no, dear, don't worry," she

murmured. She gently ushered him forward. "Come on. Sootkit, Needlekit, let's leave the den. Maybe you can talk to the elders."

As Ambertuft left the den with her kits, Sharptalon felt strange. He thought of Stormgaze.

"It's out!" Leafpool gasped. She nipped the sack the kit was in and placed him beside Monarchwing's belly. Monarchwing turned to lick her son.

"Gently!" Leafpool warned. "I think there might be one more coming. Push!" She mewed.

Monarchwing's sides convulsed. She let out a loud yowl, crunching the stick between her jaws. The stick split in half. Blood was leaking from beneath her tail and she coughed out blood.

Leafpool's gaze was clouded with concern. "Oh shoot, something is wrong!" She gasped.

"What?" Coriander gasped. "What's wrong? Is my daughter ok?" She asked.

"She-she..." Leafpool trailed off. "There shouldn't be this much blood," she murmured. She gasped suddenly. "Here comes the last one!"

Sharptalon felt a shove behind him and bristled, seeing Lighttail. His fur was slicked with rain.

"Monarchwing!" Lighttail cried. "It's ok! It's ok! I'm here for you, ok?" He whimpered.

Leafpool nipped the sack of the kit and placed her beside her brother. The she-kit whimpered, then began to suckle.

"Great job, Monarchwing!" Coriander gasped. "Smoky would be so proud," she murmured.

Monarchwing smiled softly, her gaze warm. "They're.... beautifu...l," she rasped. Suddenly she gasped, her eyes widening. She then started jerking wildly in her nest.

"Monarchwing! Monarchwing!" Lighttail cried. His two kits started to whine.

Sharptalon's ears were filled with the crying of the kits. They echoed in his mind like thoughts. He stared down at Monarchwing's flailing body. She gasped with shock. Leafpool watched in horror.

Suddenly Monarchwing was still, her eyes wide. She stared upwards at nothing, her eyes dull and distant.

Lighttail gasped with horror. "No! Monarchwing! Wake up, please!" He whimpered. He put his paws on her shoulders and shook her, his eyes wide.

"Lighttail! Stop, she's dead!" Sharptalon meowed, lashing his tail. "She's with StarClan now, with her son," he murmured.

"Her s-son?" Lighttail echoed. "What do you mean? Did one of my kits die too?" He hissed. He backed away from his mate's dead body, shaking his head in disbelief. "No, no," he whispered.

Lighttail gazed down at his son and daughter, then looked at his other son, who was dead, still in the sack. He sat down, wrapping his tail around his kits. He looked at Monarchwing's dead body. "Don't worry, Monarchwing, it's ok. I'll raise our kits to be the best warriors ever," he murmured.

"Lighttail, I need to bring them to Ambertuft. She's got kits of her own, she can nurse yours," Leafpool pointed out.

Lighttail glared at her. "It won't be the same!" He hissed. He unsheathed his claws. "You didn't even try to help her!" He growled. Suddenly, he lashed out, has claws striking her ears.

Sharptalon gasped with shock. Was his brother crazy? He ran forward. "Lighttail! Enough! I know you're sad that your mate is dead, but that doesn't give you the excuse to attack a pregnant cat!" He hissed.

"Put yourself in *my* place, Sharptalon. What would you do if your mate died because of someone else?" He growled.

"It- it's my fault," Leafpool murmured, lifting her head. The tip of her ear had been sliced and was bleeding badly, trickling down the side of her face. "I should've been more ready."

"Yeah, you should've. This really *is* your fault," Lighttail growled.

"Shut up, Lighttail! This isn't Leafpool's fault! It's only your fault! Sharptalon hissed to his brother. He saw surprise light in his gaze. "*You're* the one that got her pregnant, even if you knew that she was too young to be having kits!" He hissed.

Lighttail avoided his gaze. He shifted his paws. It was quiet enough to hear the rain pounding outside, and to hear Coriander whimpering softly. She was laying against her dauhgter's body, her muzzle buried in her neck.

"I... I," Lighttail whimpered. He backed away and bolted from the den.

Chapter 21

Sharptalon was huddled beside Stormgaze. He didn't like his mate's sister much, but he figured that he'd grieve with her.

Monarchwing's body was placed in the clearing, along with her two dead sons. Her nameless son had died shortly after his mother had died. He'd only lived for a few seconds. Wingkit was tucked up in the nursery, having no idea that her two brothers and mother were dead.

Lighttail, Coriander, and Stalkfire were crouched closest to Monarchwing's body. Sharptalon thought that Stormgaze would sit with her dead sister, but she stayed by Sharptalon.

"I'm... so sorry about your sister. She didn't deserve this," Sharptalon murmured, pressing against Stormgaze. Rain pounded on his fur, making him shiver.

"Don't be sorry. It wasn't your fault," Stormgaze murmured. She hunched her shoulders, sighing. "First my father, now my sister. I hope I don't lose anyone else," she whimpered.

Sharptalon thought about his dead mother. He missed her deeply. "I miss my mother," he sighed. "I hate to think about her, but..."

Stormgaze pressed against him. "I miss my sister and father," she murmured.

Sharptalon glanced at her. He thought about his father and sister. They'd left to join the rogues. But he knew that they didn't even care about him. Stormgaze was lucky to have kin that loved and cared about her.

"The gathering is in another moon," a voice sounded behind Sharptalon. He turned, seeing Squirrelstar.

"It's going to be hard for other cats to hear that a queen and her two sons have died," Squirrelstar pointed out. Her fur was slicked by the rain. Rain bounced off her whiskers and ears.

"I know. But maybe we shouldn't report it. It might make others think that we're weak, hearing that we lost a good warrior and two kits that would've grown into fine warriors," Sharptalon meowed.

"That won't make us look weak!" Stormgaze bristled. She lashed her tail, shifting her paws. "Just... report this if you want."

"I'm sorry, Stormgaze," Sharptalon murmured. "I didn't mean to upset you."

Stormgaze looked at him. "It's ok," she mewed. "Can we have a talk in private?" She asked. Her eyes were clouded with concern.

Sharptalon felt worry crawling up his spine. "Yeah."

Stormgaze led him to a corner in the camp, her eyes clouded with worry. "Sharp-Sharptalon," she whispered. "I'm so scared."

"Why?" Sharptalon glanced down at her. He blinked, his heart pounding in his ears.

"I'm expecting your... kits," Stormgaze murmured. She purred slightly, then stopped. "But... oh, Sharptalon, I'm so scared I'll die--like Monarchwing!" She gasped.

Sharptalon stepped closer, resting his chin on Stormgaze's head. "There's no need to be scared. You'll live through this, ok? I promise. I'm proud of you," he purred. He felt love swelling inside him.

"What am I going to tell Stalkfire or Coriander? They'll be so... furious," Stormgaze murmured. Her tail lashed.

"Maybe you can surprise them?" Sharptalon insisted. *No, she should tell her family.* He hunched his shoulders. "You should.... tell them. They'll be happy, trust me."

"Sharptalon." Lighttail slowly padded over. "I want you grieving

beside me, like a good brother."

"Lighttail, I can't. I wasn't as close to Monarchwing as you were," Sharptalon murmured. He blinked sympathetically at his brother, hoping he would understand.

"Please! You're the only kin I have left!" Lighttail cried. "The only kin I can trust. Everyone else died or betrayed us."

"What about you daughter; Wingkit?" Sharptalon prompted. "She's still alive, isn't she? You should be taking care of her."

"I...I don't think I can. It won't be the same. Not without Monarchwing," Lighttail whimpered.

"If you won't take care of your daughter, then I will," Stormgaze meowed. Rain streamed from her fur.

"No, Stormgaze. Ambertuft is already taking care of Wingkit," Sharptalon pointed out.

"I can't believe this," Lighttail whispered. "I can't even take care of my own daughter. I'm... not strong enough," he whimpered, his mew cracking.

"Just because Monarchwing isn't here doesn't mean that you can act like Wingkit isn't your daughter," Sharptalon sighed. He padded forward, resting his tail on Lighttail's shoulders. "I can be a good brother and foster her," he whispered.

"You would do that for me?" Lighttail gasped.

"Of course I would, mouse-brain," Sharptalon purred. "Go and grieve more if you need to. I'll check on Wingkit."

Sharptalon pushed through the reeds, Lighttail at his side. He leaped over the stream, his paws skidding the pebbles.

"Hey, Sharptalon? Thanks for agreeing to take care of Wingkit," Lighttail meowed.

"Well, you're welcome," Sharptalon murmured. He looked up, seeing

Tigerstar on the branch of the large blossom tree. Tawnypelt was sitting among the roots of the tree.

"We're the second Clan to arrive," Lighttail murmured. He flicked his tail. Sadness glittered in his eyes. "I should've stayed behind to grieve for Monarchwing."

"I'm glad you came with me though," Sharptalon purred.

Squirrelstar leaped on her branch. Ivypool took her place beside Tawnypelt. Mothstripe, Twistedfoot, and Flamedawn padded over to where Flametail, Ravenbreeze, and Turtlepaw sat.

"I'm going to sit with someone else," Lighttail murmured. He padded over to where Applefur sat with ShadowClan.

Sharptalon saw Sparkpelt talking with Foxleap and saw Brackenclaw sitting by her brother, Molefur. *I don't know who to sit with.* Stalkfire and Stormgaze had stayed behind in camp to grieve for their sister. *I'll sit by myself.*

Sharptalon took a place near the stream, keeping to himself. Eventually RiverClan and WindClan showed up.

"Are we ready to start the gathering?" Squirrelstar asked, her green eyes dull.

"You can go first, Squirrelstar," Tigerstar meowed, dipping his head to her.

"Well... Oh, how do I start? We... lost Monarchwing. She died while giving birth, but had two toms and a she-kit. But the two toms died..." Squirrelstar murmured, her eyes clouded.

"I'm so sorry," Tigerstar mewed, his eyes clouded with sympathy. "StarClan will welcome her and her kits."

"That's terrible," Flowerstar murmured, her mew cracking. "Monarchwing was a kind cat."

Gorsestar shifted his paws. "I'm sorry to hear that, Squirrelstar."

"But, Leafpool gave birth to Auburnkit and Peachkit soon after." Squirrelstar lifted her head. "My sister may have been a medicine cat before, but she's retired from her duties."

Gorsestar bristled. "That doesn't explain why Crowfeather betrayed his Clanmates. Maybe all that time being hidden away from his Clan made him forget about loyalty," he snarled.

"Shut up, Gorsestar!" Berrynose hissed. "Let's not forget that you ran away from your Clan when they were fighting those rogues! That got many of your Clanmates killed, and it got *Onestar* killed too!" He hissed.

Gorsestar gasped, bristling. He didn't reply.

"Berrynose. Don't talk bad like that to a Clan leader. Ever," Squirrelstar hissed.

"Yes, Squirrelstar. I'm sorry," Berrynose murmured.

"Now, lets get back on focus," Tigerstar meowed quickly, clearly impatient. "ShadowClan has four new apprentices: Birchpaw, Slatepaw, Lionpaw, and Puddlepaw."

"Birchpaw! Slatepaw! Lionpaw! Puddlepaw!" The Clans cheered.

Tigerstar lifted his tail. "Snowbird gave birth to a new litter of kits, which will make us strong. And Needlepaw earned her warrior name, Needletail," he announced proudly.

Sharptalon bristled, ignoring the cheering of Needletail's name. Was Tigerstar rubbing Snowbird's new kits in ThunderClan's faces? He'd heard that a queen and her two kits had died, and he seemed to make it seem like ThunderClan's loss was ShadowClan's gain.

"The prey is running well in WindClan," Gorsestar meowed. "We are still struggling with this sickness, though," he murmured.

"What kind of sickness?" Mothstripe asked.

"I'm not sure. A crazy fox bit Kestrelflight while he was out collecting herbs. Kestrelflight isn't doing too good though. He has

these... fits. He sometimes can't even remember which herb he's using," Gorsestar murmured. "I'm worried what will happen to him."

"Does anyone else have the sickness?" Squirrelstar asked.

"Kestrelflight only. Well, a few other warriors are sick. Sedgewhisker and Sparkfur are sick, and I was recently sick myself. But they aren't acting as crazy as Kestrelflight is. He snaps at every cat even if they don't bother him," Gorsestar meowed.

"I've tried to help him but all he does is lash out and scream," Rabbittail meowed. "I can't figure out what's wrong with him," he murmured.

"I'll come over to your camp tomorrow and see if I can figure something out," Mothstripe meowed. "Squirrelstar, is it ok with you?"

"Fine by me," Squirrelstar meowed. "I'm sorry about Kestrelflight. I hope he gets better soon."

"Don't be sorry, Squirrelstar. It's not your fault," Gorsestar meowed.

"Well, the prey in RiverClan is running well. Or should it say swimming? We have have three new Apprentices: Briarpaw, Dawnpaw, and Alderpaw," Flowerstar announced.

As the Clans cheered their names, Sharptalon turned around. He thought he heard rustling in the bushes. A ghostly tail poking from the bushes caught his attention.

Sharptalon looked around, making sure no cat was watching him. He sneaked forward, leaping the stream and pushing through the reeds. He saw the dark outline of a cat. Wolffang. The dark gray Dark Forest tom was staring at him.

"Wolffang. What do you want?" Sharptalon asked.

Wolffang's amber eyes glowed. "The sickness that Gorsestar is talking about... It will be a threat to the Clans."

"Yeah?" Sharptalon prompted.

"Which means you need to kill Kestrelflight, Sharptalon. He's got this new sickness and he'll spread it," Wolffang growled.

"What? Are you crazy? I'm not killing a medicine cat!" Sharptalon gasped. He lashed his tail.

"But think about *this*... What are you going to do if this sickness spreads to *your* Clan?" Wolffang began. "Think about Stormgaze and her kits. Think about Lighttail and Wingkit."

"There's no way that it will spread to them," Sharptalon hissed. He lashed his tail, watching Wolffang's figure fade.

Chapter 22

"Get it right this time."

Sharptalon flung himself at Rowandust, shoving him up against a rotting tree. He dug his claws in hard.

"You have to fight harder than this!" Wolffang called out. He stepped forward.

Sharptalon kicked Rowandust in the stomach, making him gasp with pain. He then pushed him down to the side, clamping his jaws against his neck.

"Better. But can you counter this?" Rowandust hissed. He kicked out, hitting Sharptalon's stomach and knocking the breath from him.

Sharptalon hooked his claws into his mentor's shoulders, trying to hold on. He felt a surge of pain as a pawful of claws raked his belly. He kept holding on.

Rowandust smirked. "That's right. You don't let go until your enemy gets tired. Then you finish them off."

Sharptalon then felt a tug on his scruff. He was hauled off Rowandust and was thrown to the ground. Wolffang was on top of him, his paw on his throat. "Watch your back. This will happen in a battle."

Sharptalon grunted, slithering out from under Wolffang.

"The stupid play-dead trick makes Clan cats seem more like opossums than cats. So if you're pinned down, don't act dead or defeated. Bite your attacker's paw or give them some powerful kicks

to the belly," Wolffang advised.

"Thanks," Sharptalon meowed.

"Don't thank me, Sharppaw," Wolffang growled.

Sharptalon bristled, flattening his ears. "Hey, I told you not to call me that anymore!" He hissed.

"You're still an apprentice in my eyes. You don't become a warrior unless you kill someone," Wolffang snarled. He lashed his tail.

"Good. I've been wanting to kill Snowbreeze and Frostheart for a long time," Sharptalon meowed.

"Why not kill Darktail? You could kill him and take over the rogues and be their leader," Wolffang sighed. "Not many leaders end up in the Dark Forest."

"Hey," a deep voice hissed. A large, scarred, dark brown tabby tom padded from the shadows. His face was scarred and his ears were torn. His amber eyes glowed. "I'm still here."

"Oh, yeah, Brokenstar. I forgot you were still here," Wolffang sighed.

"How can you forget a cat like me?" Brokenstar growled. He came closer. "Tigerstar died. Now I make the rules in this place."

"Tigerstar died?" Sharptalon echoed. "By who? Or what?"

"Stupid mange-pelt was weaker then we all thought. He was blinded and killed by an apprentice. Jaywing," Brokenstar growled.

"Jaywing? She's old now," Sharptalon murmured.

"And her father Ashstar killed Thistleclaw too. Not many of us left. But Hawkfrost is great. And Wolffang, don't you dare forget that Russetstar and Crowstar are still here," Brokenstar hissed, lashing his tail.

"I haven't... forgot," Wolffang murmured.

"Sharptalon, I need your help. The Dark Forest needs more recruits. Is there any cat in your Clan that would seem willing to train?" Brokenstar asked, his whiskers twitching.

"Not any that I know. Maybe Berrynose?" Sharptalon mewed.

"How about Ivypool or Sparkpelt?" A new voice suggested. A dark brown tabby tom padded from the shadows, Crowstar at his side.

"Hawkfrost, Crowstar," Brokenstar dipped his head.

"There's no way Ivypool would train here. She's too loyal to her Clan," Sharptalon pointed out. "But Sparkpelt seems tough."

"I don't want to mess with Firestar's kin," Brokenstar growled. He looked at Wolffang. "What about your son Mistfang?" He asked. "And your daughter Cherryflight?"

"I think they'll train here once they see that I'm here," Wolffang meowed.

"Good," Brokenstar purred.

"What about Breezepelt?" Rowandust asked, his green eyes shimmering. "He's been mad ever since his father left WindClan for Leafpool," he pointed out. "He's angry and he might want to train here to get revenge."

"Good," Brokenstar purred. "I'll visit Sparkpelt and Breezepelt tonight. Wolffang, you're in charge of visiting Mistfang and Cherryflight."

Sharptalon licked Stormgaze's head. "Thanks for listening to me. I was glad you decided to go to the nursery early."

"Anything for you, mouse-brain," Stormgaze purred. She took in a deep breath and sighed, closing her eyes. "I think I can already feel them kicking inside me. I wonder what they'll look like."

"I do too," Sharptalon purred.

"Sharptalon!" A tiny voice squeaked. Wingkit came scampering from

the nursery, her bright amber eyes shimmering. Her tortoiseshell fur was fluffed up excitedly.

"Yes?" Sharptalon sat up.

"Where did Mothstripe go?" The small kit asked.

"She's in WindClan's camp," Sharptalon meowed. "Uh, while Kestrelflight is sick. She's trying to figure out what's wrong with him."

Wingkit's eyes clouded with sadness. "She's really nice to me. I hope she's ok," she murmured.

Stormgaze stood up. "I'll go get us something to eat," she meowed before padding away.

Wingkit stepped closer, resting against Sharptalon's leg. "Sharptalon? Where's my mother?" She asked. "Ambertuft doesn't even feel like my mom."

"Your mother is... g-gone. She ran away," Sharptalon lied.

"Why did she run away?" Wingkit asked.

"I don't know. She thought she couldn't take care of you properly so she left," Sharptalon lied once more.

"Do you miss her?" Wingkit asked.

"I... guess," Sharptalon murmured. *I don't.*

"Why don't you miss her? You're my father," Wingkit whimpered.

Sharptalon froze. He felt sympathetic towards her. "I'm sorry. I'm not your father, Wingkit. But I promise to take care of you."

"Then who is my father?" Wingkit asked. "Ripplewind? He seems to take care of my siblings."

"No. Your father.... he's filled with grief. He couldn't take care of you after your mother left him," Sharptalon meowed, curling his tail

around Wingkit.

"Why not?" Wingkit's eyes rounded. "Doesn't he love me? Does he care about me?" She asked, her mew cracking.

"He loves you deeply, Wingkit. That's why he put me in charge of fostering you," Sharptalon mewed. He touched his muzzle to hers.

Stormgaze padded up, two mice in her jaws. She dropped one beside Sharptalon's paws.

Wingkit glanced up at Sharptalon. "Ok. That makes sense, I... guess," she murmured. "What about my siblings? Why aren't they as small as me?" She asked.

"They're five moons old. About to be six. You weren't born with them," Sharptalon meowed. He didn't want to tell her about how her two brothers had died.

"Blazekit is the nicest to me. He always plays with me even if his sisters make fun of him," Wingkit mewed.

"That's nice of him," Sharptalon purred. He crouched his eat his mouse.

"Wingkit! Get back to the nursery!" Ambertuft called. She gazed warmly at the kit as she scampered into the den.

"She's a nice kit," Stormgaze murmured. "I wonder why Lighttail won't even take care of her. He's lucky to have her," she meowed, taking a bite of her mouse.

"I know. But I don't mind taking care of her. I'll treat her like my own kit," Sharptalon purred. He took another bite of his mouse. *I just hope she doesn't die. Not like her siblings or mother...*

Chapter 23

"So you're training with them too?" Sparkpelt asked.

Breezepelt gazed at her. "Uh, yes."

The training cats had decided to meet by the Great Blossom. Sharptalon, Sparkpelt, Breezepelt, Mistfang, and Spikefur were meeting here.

"I'd been training there for a while," Sharptalon admitted. "Ever since I was an apprentice."

"I like training there," Breezepelt meowed. "It takes my mind off... Crowfeather."

"I only wanted to see Wolffang, my father. But I like the training. It's good," Mistfang meowed. "I can't believe Cherryflight doesn't like it there."

Sparkpelt looked around. "I train there because I want to become a better warrior."

Sharptalon lifted his head. "And I train there because I want revenge on my father and sister," he meowed, lashing his tail. "They made my life miserable."

"Spikefur, what about you?" Sparkpelt asked, looking at the ShadowClan tom.

"I don't know yet. Brokenstar said that he'd help me become a better warrior," Spikefur meowed.

"Then we've all figured out why we're training there," Sharptalon

meowed smoothly. "Lets go home."

Sharptalon walked into camp, Sparkpelt and Mistfang by his side. He could smell WindClan and fear-scent. He bristled. Was WindClan attacking? "What's going on?" He growled.

"WindClan came back with Mothstripe." Ambertuft padded forward, her tail flicking. "S-Sharptalon, I thought you said you'd be back in time for my kits' apprentice ceremonies."

The thought had completed slipped his mind. "Oh, Ambertuft. I'm sorry. I just forgot about it," he murmured.

"It's fine," Ambertuft sighed. "WindClan only brought Mothstripe back because she got the... sickness," Ambertuft explained.

"What? How?" Sharptalon gasped.

"Eaglefeather said Kestrelflight was acting crazier and bit Mothstripe when she tried to see if she could cure his sickness," Ambertuft explained. "Now Mothstripe is running a fever and.... seems a bit quiet."

"When did she get attacked?" Sharptalon asked. He wondered what this sickness was. Maybe Wolffang was right about it being a threat.

Berrynose padded forward. "Stupid WindClan thought that they should keep the secret to themselves. They told us she'd been attacked five days ago!" He hissed. "Now *we* have a sick cat in our camp that *we* have to worry about!"

Eaglefeather, Sunstrike, and Boulderfur padded from the crowd of cats, their eyes clouded. Eaglefeather glanced at Sharptalon. "Hey. Sorry about your medicine cat," he meowed. "We should've told you sooner."

"Yeah, you should've. But if WindClan cats weren't so cowardice, then-"

"Shut it, Berrynose. Even if they'd of told us sooner, we'd still have this problem," Ambertuft growled, interrupting Berrynose.

"See you at the next gathering," Eaglefeather meowed, dipping his head to Sharptalon and the others.

Sharptalon turned to Ambertuft, blinking at his former mentor. He padded past her, his tail flicking. Heading to the fresh-kill pile, he grabbed a mouse and a plump squirrel. He padded towards the nursery.

Squeezing through, Sharptalon saw Leafpool comforting Coriander in the corner. Auburnkit and Peachkit were playing with Wingkit. Phoenixwing was watching them with Stormgaze.

Stormgaze looked up, her bright green eyes shimmering. "Sharptalon!" She purred. "Bring me something to eat?"

"Yeah, I did," Sharptalon purred. He dropped the mouse by her paws. "I'll give the squirrel to Leafpool and Ambertuft," he meowed.

"What about Coriander and Phoenixwing?" Stormgaze asked, blinking.

"We've already had a meal," Phoenixwing meowed. "But thank you for caring."

"No problem," Stormgaze purred, slumping on her side and kneading at the moss. "I wish these kits could be born already," she trilled.

"I know," Sharptalon meowed. He crouched down. "What do you think we should name them? He asked.

"We can't name them until we see them, mouse-brain!" Stormgaze meowed playfully. "What do you think they'll look like?" She asked.

"I think one will look like you," Sharptalon guessed. "And one might look like me."

Stormgaze purred, her green eyes shimmering.

"Sharptalon!"

Sharptalon froze as he heard Squirrelstar's voice. He blinked sadly

at Stormgaze. "I'll see what she wants," he murmured. He turned around and padded from the den, seeing Squirrelstar on the high-ledge. Ivypool was with her, along with Twistedfoot and Flamedawn.

Sharptalon crossed the clearing quickly, his tail flicking. He climbed up the rocks and blinked at Squirrelstar.

"Come in my den. We have a few things we should probably... discuss," Squirrelstar meowed, her whiskers twitching. She led Sharptalon into her den.

Squirrelstar, Ivypool, Twistedfoot, and Flamedawn sat down, their eyes clouded with concern. Squirrelstar shifted her paws. "So, Sharptalon. I suppose you don't know why we've called you."

"Right," Sharptalon meowed, shifting his paws.

Squirrelstar then nodded to Twistedfoot and Flamedawn.

"We think we had a prophecy about you," Flamedawn murmured. "Ashstar warned us about it."

"He told us that 'the sharp talon will draw blood'," Twistedfoot mewed. "I don't know but... It might be hinting to you, Sharptalon," he meowed, flattening his ears.

"Look, Sharptalon. It may not be related to you, but just to be sure, I'm going to keep a close eye on you," Squirrelstar meowed, her voice filled with guilt.

"What? Squirrelstar, are you--?" Sharptalon growled. "I'm loyal to my Clan! I'd never kill some other cat unless I had to!" He hissed.

"I'm..." Squirrelstar sighed. "Better to be safe than sorry," she breathed.

"I'm your Clanmate! Think about this! You can't just not trust me all of a sudden!" Sharptalon hissed, bristling.

Ivypool stood up, bristling and flattening her ears. "Sharptalon. Don't forget that you keep waking up every night with scratches.

Squirrelstar has a reason to not trust you."

"I can't help-" Sharptalon began.

"Enough!" Squirrelstar hissed, lashing her tail. "Sharptalon. Tell us why you wake up in an injured state. Tell me that I can trust you!" She snapped.

Sharptalon stared at them, feeling powerless. *I can't lie. But I can't tell the truth either. What do I do*? He hung his head low, feeling guilty. "I'm so sorry! I train in the Dark Forest!" He mewed.

Ivypool gasped, unsheathing her claws.

Twistedfoot backed away, his green eyes clouding with alarm.

Flamedawn's eyes widened. "H-how we trust you?" He gasped, his voice filled his disbelief.

"Listen, I'm sorry that I-"

"Sharptalon! Do you know how evil the Dark Forest is? That's where evil cats go!" Squirrelstar snarled. "Tigerstar may be dead. But there's still Brokenstar and Thistleclaw and Hawkfrost... and any other blood-thirsty cat in there.

"So you lied? You're not even loyal to us. Maybe Snowbreeze was right about you being just as filthy as those rogues!" Ivypool hissed.

"No, no. Sharptalon, you can't be serious," Flamedawn mewed. He looked away. "All those times I thought you were.... No, this isn't you." Flamedawn shook his head in disbelief.

"I'm sorry. I only trained there because I wanted to be a better warrior for my Clan," Sharptalon mewed honestly. He glanced around at them desperately.

"We need to punish him, Squirrelstar," Ivypool growled. She looked over at her leader.

"I'm thinking," Squirrelstar sighed. She flattened her ears. "For now, Sharptalon, you will be a prisoner with apprentice duties."

"He can't clean out the elders' den. I don't trust that," Ivypool sighed. "He should just be a prisoner."

Sharptalon felt like unsheathing his claws. Ivypool was being unfair. "That's not fair!" He argued.

"No. I.. Sharptalon..." Squirrelstar trailed off. "You're fine for now. But if you continue to train in the Dark Forest, you'll be punished."

Chapter 24

"Listen, Wolffang. I'm sorry but I can't train here anymore. I have to be loyal to my Clan," Sharptalon explained. "But it was nice here."

"Who cares about loyalty to your Clan," Wolffang spat. His eyes clouded with misery. "My father wasn't loyal to me even though I told him..." he stopped suddenly, bristling. "Nevermind."

"But listen. Maybe I can still train here if we all keep our claws sheathed," Sharptalon suggested. He blinked hopefully at his friend.

"I don't know, Sharppaw," Wolffang sighed.

Sharptalon bristled. "I told you to stop calling me that. I'm a warrior."

"And here you aren't," Wolffang hissed. He turned, leaping on Sharptalon, his claws sinking into his pelt. "Kill Kestrelflight. Kill Snowbreeze and Frostheart."

"I won't kill a medicine cat," Sharptalon hissed, kicking and clawing at Wolffang's belly.

Wolffang clenched his teeth but held on. "You think that you won't. But I know you will eventually. That kittypet you killed... he was innocent."

"That's because you told me to kill him!" Sharptalon hissed. Rage burned his claws. "I have had enough of you telling me what to do!" He yowled. He struck forward, clamping his jaws around Wolffang's throat. Surprise lit in the tom's gaze.

Sharptalon hauled Wolffang off of him, knocking him to the ground. Wolffang's breathing was heavy and fast. He then realized what he'd done. Blood pooled from a gash in the dark gray tom's throat. He made a gurgling sound.

"Wolffang! I'm-- sorry!" Sharptalon gasped. *I've become someone I can't control...*

Wolffang got to his paws, flattening his ears. Blood dripped from his throat and dribbled down his chin. "I'm fine." He shoved past Sharptalon, leaving behind a dark trail of blood droplets as he disappeared into the shadows of the trees.

Sharptalon felt darkness swarm around him, which was then replaced by bright light. He stared around him, his paws itching. A grassy field was under his paws. Stars twinkled around him. Suddenly, a gray tom dappled with darker gray flecks appeared in front of Sharptalon, his dark blue eyes unreadable.

The gray tom had a torn ear and a scarred pelt. He looked at Sharptalon. "Sharptalon, I'm Ashstar."

Sharptalon blinked. He'd heard of this tom before. The recent ThunderClan leader that had given his last life for his Clanmates. But why would a *StarClan* cat be visiting him?

"Why are you here?" Sharptalon growled, lashing his tail.

"I was hoping you'd understand me," Ashstar sighed, sitting down. Muscles rippled beneath his pelt. "When I was a warrior, I trained in the Dark Forest too. I thought it would be good for me. But I was wrong. I hope you figure that out someday."

"You? Training in the Dark Forest? I'd never believe!" Sharptalon growled.

"I trained there. But I learned from it. Wolffang is my son, and I'm not proud he went there after death. Sharptalon, please, I'm begging you. Don't trust any of those cats," Ashstar begged. "I don't want more of my kin to end up there."

Sharptalon avoided the tom's gaze. *I don't know how to respond. The Dark Forest practically raised me...*

"Wolffang is not a good cat. Trust me." Ashstar blinked at him, his ears pricked.

Sharptalon turned on him. "Wolffang is good. He's my friend!" He hissed. "You know I don't care if I train in the Dark Forest. I'm doing it for the good of my Clan. I'm doing it to finally take revenge on my father and sister."

Ashstar narrowed his eyes. "I knew it. I knew you were the cat in the prophecy. You're the cat who will draw a bloody wound into the Clan," he snarled.

Sharptalon bristled, unsheathing his claws. He remembered what Flamedawn had told him when he was still an apprentice. "You don't know anything about me!"

"Yes I do. You're-" Ashstar was cut off as bushes rustled behind him. Three cats slid from the bushes.

A gray tabby tom with cloudy blue eyes twitched his whiskers. Was this tom blind? A large golden tabby tom stood beside him, his gaze cold. A black she-cat stood beside him, her green gaze narrowed.

Ashstar dipped his head. "Jayfeather, Lionblaze, Hollyleaf," he breathed.

"This tom. Sharptalon, right?" Jayfeather prompted, his whiskers twitching.

"He's part of the prophecy. He's training with the Dark Forest," Ashstar growled.

Sharptalon bristled, his ears flattening. "Get away from me!" He hissed, lashing his tail. Suddenly a familiar scent flooded around him. Fear drained from his pelt. Memories of him being a kit in the nursery flooded his head. He froze.

A fluffy white she-cat with brown splotches padded from behind Jayfeather, Lionblaze, and Hollyleaf. Her blue gaze was soft yet disbelieving.

"Sharptalon..." Fluffypelt murmured.

Sharptalon was speechless. He turned around, closing his eyes tight. He couldn't bear to hear his mother's words. He ran blindly across

the star-filled meadow.

"Sharptalon, lead a border patrol at the ShadowClan border. Take Bramblehawk, Ambertuft, Brackenclaw, and Needlepaw." Ivypool had said.

Sharptalon was now leading his patrol through the undergrowth, heading towards the ShadowClan border. He wondered why Ivypool hadn't sent them to patrol the rogue's border, but he didn't question her decision. He also wondered why Ivypool even trusted him to lead a border patrol.

"Sharptalon? Are you even paying attention?" Ambertuft suddenly asked.

Sharptalon shook out his pelt. His thoughts still clouded his mind. "Yes, I am," he mumbled, his tail flicking.

Ambertuft hurried to his side, her eyes clouded with concern. "Are you ok?" She asked. "Ever since Squirrelstar called you into her den, you've been a bit shaky."

Sharptalon glanced at his former mentor, twitching his whiskers. "I'm fine, Ambertuft." He halted quickly as the scent of rogue touched his nose. "Wait."

Ambertuft halted too, her whiskers twitching. She bristled, looking around. "Rogue."

The large frame of Bramblehawk appeared on Sharptalon's other side. "Great StarClan. Why is their scent all the way near the ShadowClan border?"

Brackenclaw bristled, her apprentice at her side. "Are those the rogues?" She asked.

"Yes. We need to be carefu-" Ambertuft was suddenly cut off by a loud screech.

"DarkClan, attack!"

Suddenly, white fur flashed above Sharptalon. It landed on him,

claws skidding down his flanks. He yowled in pain.

Ambertuft was beside him, writhing on the ground with a large, long-haired gray tom. She hissed, throwing a paw of claws at his face.

Suddenly, the familiar scent of Snowbreeze hit Sharptalon. The cat who'd dropped on him was his father! Rage surged through him. Sharptalon turned on the tom, striking his chest. He ripped out a pawful of fur.

Snowbreeze hissed in anger, kicking out and knocking Sharptalon off his paws. He shoved his muzzle into the rough dirt and Sharptalon couldn't breath. He struggled under his father's heavy weight, his tail lashing widly.

A memory flashed in Sharptalon's mind. He remembered when he was an apprentice, when his father tried to cut off his air supply. He struck out with his hind legs, kicking the soft belly fur of Snowbreeze. He twisted around, striking his claws across his father's cheek.

Suddenly a panicked screech sounded behind Sharptalon. He turned around, horror spreading in his chest as he saw Rain, the long-haired gray tom, with Ambertuft's throat in his jaws.

Ambertuft was scrambling frantically against the rogue deputy, her eyes wide with horror. Blood was streaming from her throat and bubbled from her mouth.

Sharptalon was about to rush forward when suddenly he felt a tug at his tail. He turned around and was met with sharp claws striking his cheek. Snowbreeze crashed on top of him, then looked up, flicking his tail. "Go!" He hissed.

Sharptalon bared his teeth, flattening his ears. He kicked roughly, striking Snowbreeze's stomach. He tore at the soft fur. Then Sharptalon swung his forepaw upward, striking his father's chin roughly. He kicked him away as Snowbreeze growled in pain.

Ambertuft! Sharptalon turned around, his heart pounding. He saw

that Rain was gone. Ambertuft was lying on the ground, a large gash in her throat. Blood was pooled around her. Her amber fur was stained with the scarlet liquid.

"Ambertuft!" Sharptalon cried.

Chapter 25

Sharptalon rushed forward, his paws splashing in Ambertuft's blood. He felt sick staring down at her split throat where blood spilled out viciously.

"No, no.....!" Sharptalon cried. He'd lost his mother, now his former mentor was dead. Heavy paws crashed on his shoulders, unbalancing him. Snowbreeze had jumped over him and was crashing through the undergrowth. Sleekwhisker, Minnow, Shimmer, and Thistle raced after him.

"Stupid rogues!" Bramblehawk limped forward. His left ear had a split down the middle that was streaming blood. A gash was in his shoulder that stained his dark brown tabby fur. Scratches was across his right cheek and muzzle. He looked down at Ambertuft, his eyes widening in horror.

Brackenclaw and Needlepaw rushed forward. Brackenclaw's pelt was splashed with blood and Needlepaw's ear was torn, along with a large gash in her flank. She gasped with horror, staring down at her dead mother. "Ambertuft!" She cried.

Sharptalon felt his heart break as Needlepaw crouched in the pool of blood and buried her nose in her mother's fur.

"No.. they... they couldn't have killed her!" Bramblehawk gasped.

Brackenclaw blinked at them. "Listen, I know you're grieving, but we have to go. The rogues could be attacking the camp right now. Our Clanmates need our help," she panted.

"We can't. I'm staying with my mother!" Needlepaw hissed.

"I knew your mother, Needlepaw. She was my mentor. She wouldn't of just wanted you to stand here and grieve all day, she would've

wanted you to chase those rogues and make sure they pay for hurting her Clanmates," Sharptalon insisted. He rested his tail on the small she-cat's shoulder. "I'll make sure they pay for what they did."

Needlepaw looked up. "I.... I think you're right." She stood up, sinking her claws into the grass. "I can't wait to sink my claws into the one that did this."

Sharptalon felt a strange feeling surge through him. She's perfect for training in the Dark Forest. *Should I show Brokenstar?* He padded into the undergrowth. "There's no time for a burial. Let's go."

Suddenly, grass rustled behind the battered patrol. Sharptalon turned, ShadowClan scent touching his nose.

A patrol consisting of Juniperclaw, Applefur, Beenose, and Stonewing came from the undergrowth. The tall pines of their forest stretched behind them. Their eyes widened in surprise.

Juniperclaw rushed forward, bristling. "What happened?"

"What attacked you?" Beenose asked, her whiskers twitching in alarm.

"Rogues," Sharptalon breathed, lashing his tail. "They ambushed us and killed Ambertuft! Then they left. We think they're heading for our camp," he panted.

Juniperclaw looked down at Ambertuft's dead body, unsheathing his claws. "The rogues did this? Was Sleekwhisker with them?"

"She was," Brackenclaw answered.

"And she gave me something to remember," Bramblehawk hissed, flicking his badly torn ear.

Juniperclaw glanced at them. "We were patrolling the border and heard fighting, so we thought we'd check it out," he meowed. "Sorry for being on your territory."

"No, no, that's ok. But I think... we may need your help," Needlepaw

suddenly meowed.

"What?" Brackenclaw gasped.

Applefur blinked in surprise.

"As much as I don't want you dragged into this battle, I..." Needlepaw trailed off. "I just... we just need your help. We need as much claws as we can get."

Sharptalon was surprised. He liked her fighting spirit. "You don't have to help."

Juniperclaw flattened his ears. "No. We'll help. I'm tired of these rogues killing us. We need to fight back," he growled.

"Are you crazy? We don't know if we can trust them!" Stonewing hissed.

"I'm leader of this patrol. Go back to ShadowClan and tell Tigerstar where we are," Juniperclaw meowed.

Beenose stepped forward, Applefur at her side. "We'll help too," they meowed.

Sharptalon flicked his tail. "Then come on. Our camp might be under attack."

The sound of screeching cats echoed around the camp. Sharptalon tore through the bramble barrier, his heart pounding in his ears. He may of been battered: scratches on his shoulders and cheek; but he knew he'd fight hard to protect his Clan.

Sharptalon couldn't wait for the blood of the rogues to stain his paws. He rushed forward, seeing Darktail fighting with Squirrelstar in the center of camp. He wanted to help her, but knew he should help someone else.

A panicked screech sounded from the nursery. Sharptalon bolted for it as fast as he could, his heart pounding. He reached it and spotted a dusty brown rogue fighting with Leafpool.

Phoenixwing was stretched out in the corner of the den, Stormgaze with her. Coriander was with them, Wingkit, Auburnkit, and Peachkit hiding under her stomach. Was Phoenixwing kitting already?

Sharptalon rushed forward, grabbing the brown rogue by the scruff. Its eyes widened in surprise as it was lifted.

"Get out of here!" Sharptalon growled, slamming the tom down. His claws caught the rogue's shoulders.

The rogue curled his lip. "This isn't the last of us," he hissed.

A small black and white male rogue rushed up to the den. "Viper! Let's go!" He hissed.

Viper slithered from Sharptalon's grip and followed the other rogue. They seemed pretty young.

"Sharptalon! Thank StarClan you're here!" Stormgaze gasped. She rushed forward, her round belly swinging. "Please fetch a medicine cat! Phoenixwing is giving birth!"

"Since when?" Sharptalon asked. He rested his chin on his mate's head for a quick second before pulling away.

"Before the rogues came. Basically right after you left," Stormgaze meowed. Her eyes widened. "You're hurt! What happened? I didn't see that rogue attack you!"

"It's nothing," Sharptalon sighed.

Leafpool turned away from Phoenixwing, her eyes slits. "Sharptalon! Get a medicine cat for StarClan's sake!" She hissed. A bloody scratch was on her muzzle. "I can't do all this by myself."

Sharptalon turned all round and rushed from the den, turning towards the medicine den. He parted through the swinging dusty brambles and saw all three medicine cats.

"Sharptalon! What's going on out there?" Mothstripe padded from the dark corner of the medicine den.

"The rogues are attacking. I think all of them could be here," Sharptalon panted. "Please come quick. Phoenixwing is giving birth."

Chapter 26

Sharptalon crashed into a large black tom. He struck the rogue's ear. The tom turned on him, and Sharptalon saw that one patch of ginger tabby fur was on his muzzle and chin.

Suddenly Darktail rushed forward, his claws striking Sharptalon's jaw. "I see you've met Moldclaw," the white leader sneered.

Moldclaw, the large black tom with a ginger patch on his muzzle and chin, flattened his ears. "I'm Darktail's brother," he hissed.

Confusion hit Sharptalon like a pair of claws. "Wait, what? I thought you said you were the only kitten in your litter to survive!" Sharptalon hissed to Darktail.

"I thought I was too. Me and Smoke thought they were dead, but turns out they weren't," Darktail explained.

"So Moldclaw isn't your only sibling?" Sharptalon growled.

"No. I have a sister and two other brothers. Remember Thorn? He's my brother," Darktail mewed.

"He's your brother? Then why did you let that happen to his eyes?" Sharptalon growled.

"Because I don't allow weaknessess like that in my Clan," Darktail growled. He then lifted his tail.

"And I don't allow threats like you in my Clan!" Sharptalon hissed, ready to lunge.

A pale golden-brown she-cat with blue eyes raced forward. A mottled gray tabby tom with amber eyes followed her.

Sharptalon backed up, lashing his tail. He was ready to fight all four if he had to.

"Lightningstrike, would you like to get him first?" Darktail asked the mottled gray tabby tom.

Lightningstrike raced forward, striking out with a paw.

Sharptalon wasn't fast enough to flinch back. The tips of the rogue's claws hit his nose. Blood swelled on the wound.

Darktail nodded to the pale golden-brown she-cat. "I'm sure you want to join in, Goldensmoke."

Goldensmoke leaped forward, unsheathing her claws. "You'll pay for betraying my brother!" She hissed. She bunched her muscles and leaped high, her claws striking Sharptalon's head. She pushed down and slammed his chin on the rough ground.

Sharptalon felt pain shoot through his head like lightning. White light flared across his vision for a second.

Darktail turned to Moldclaw. "Now. Finish that fight with Squirrelstar, brother."

Sharptalon bared his fangs. "You won't win this. Even if you've killed one of my Clanmates.... my mentor," Sharptalon growled, his voice cracking with grief.

"Get off him, filthy rogues!"

Sharptalon blinked, seeing Lighttail race towards him. Lighttail leaped on Goldensmoke, knocking her off Sharptalon.

Sharptalon got to his paws. Darktail leaped on Lighttail, digging his claws in his flanks. He scored them down the tom's flanks suddenly, leaving scratches.

Sharptalon lashed out and hit Lightningstrike's muzzle. He reared back as the tom swung a paw towards him. Sharptalon then raced forward, ducking underneath the rogue's belly. He slashed his claws across the tom's stomach and began pummeling with his forepaws as hard as he could. Fur spattered his face and soon drops of blood dribbled onto his pelt.

Lightningstrike dropped onto Sharptalon, blocking his churning paws. He sprang upward and landed on all fours. He was panting now, a look of exhaustion in his eyes.

Sharptalon got to his paws, shaking gray fur and blood from his pelt. "Tired, eh?" He hissed.

Lightningstrike glanced at him, his flanks heaving. Blood dripped onto the ground under his belly. His tail lashed with anger.

But he's weak. Sharptalon lunged forward, crashing into the tom. He was pinning the tom down, his claws dug deep into his shoulders. He brought a paw down, slashing the tom's cheek. Blood spattered on the ground and welled on the scratch.

Sharptalon raised a paw, his claws shimmering in the sunlight. "Ready to die?" He hissed.

Lightningstrike glared at him. "I'm not afraid." He curled his lip, whiskers twitching.

Sharptalon hissed. He was about to bring his paw down to slash the rogue's throat, but Lighttail rushed over.

"Stop, Sharptalon! Don't kill him!" Lighttail gasped. He was struggling for breath. Gashes were carved into his flanks, blood drooling down them and trickling through his pale fur.

"Why not? He's a threat," Sharptalon hissed. He raised his paw higher, baring his fangs.

"He's not a threat anymore. He's beaten. If you kill him.... then," Lighttail stopped. He stumbled, blinking, then collapsed on the ground.

"Lighttail!" Sharptalon gasped. He scrambled off Lightningstrike and rushed to his brother. Blood stained the tom's pale fur and he looked weak. But he was still breathing. Blood streamed from the gashes in his flanks, pooling around him.

"Lighttail! Stay awake! Please! I need you, brother!" Sharptalon cried, his voice cracking with pain. He wouldn't let his brother die.

Not like this.

Suddenly, sharp claws dug into his shoulders, pulling him back. A familiar scent touched his nose.

The dark, rusty-brown pelt of Falconflight flashed behind Sharptalon.

"You," Falconflight growled. "You're still alive?" He sneered.

"Yeah, so?" Sharptalon unsheathed his claws. "Got a problem with me, rogue?" He hissed.

Falconflight growled with rage, lunging forward, his claws extended.

Sharptalon ducked down low and rolled to the side. Before Falconflight could find his paws, Sharptalon lunged for him and raked his claws down his side.

Falconflight turned quickly, lashing out with a paw. He hit Sharptalon's legs, knocking him down. He lashed out at Sharptalon's ears, striking the torn one.

Sharptalon growled and shoved his head into his enemy's chest, knocking him backwards. He slashed at the tom's shoulder, tearing out a clump of fur.

Falconflight growled and shoved Sharptalon away. He reared on his hindpaws and sent a flurry of blows to Sharptalon's face.

Instinctively, Sharptalon closed his eyes tight and flinched back. He leaped backwards and then struck a blow to Falconflight's cheek, then swung his other paw out, catching his muzzle. Sharptalon hung back and landed another blow to Falconflight's ears. Blood spattered the ground and Sharptalon felt hot pain slice through his paw. One of his claws had come out.

Falconflight lunged forward, knocking Sharptalon backwards. He sank his teeth into Sharptalon's shoulder, earning a painful yowl.

Sharptalon kicked and scrambled against Falconflight, his teeth

bared. Blood trickled through his fur from his ear being torn and the scratch on his cheek.

Falconflight pressed a paw against Sharptalon's cheek, pressing his face into the dirt.

Sharptalon bared his fangs. His struggles got weaker and he finally gave up. *This is where I die. I'll never see my mate again, and I'll never know my kits!* Breath billowed around his ear.

"You should've died a long time ago. I don't know why Snowbreeze didn't just finish you off," Falconflight hissed in Sharptalon's ear. He unsheathed his claws and sank them into Sharptalon's fur. "I guess he saved you for me." Falconflight reared up, raising a paw. He flattened his ears. His claws glinted in the sunlight.

Sharptalon's blood pounded in his ears. Without thinking, he lashed out, his claws striking Falconflight's throat. He slithered out from under him.

Falconflight gasped in surprise. His eyes widened in horror as he looked down at the gash in his throat. He staggered, blood bubbling at his mouth. He lashed his tail. Falconflight coughed up blood.

Sharptalon staggered away from the tom, watching as his blood spattered the ground. Blood trickled down his chin and stained his mouth. His eyes were fixed in disbelief on the gash in his throat.

Falconflight put his paw to the gash, but his blood only spilled over his paw. He staggered again and stumbled, finally collapsing on the ground. His blood pooled around him as he twitched violently, his body jerking. His body then stopped moving. His slitted eyes fixed on Sharptalon. "This isn't the last you'll see of me," he gurgled, blood bubbling in his mouth.

Sharptalon watched as Falconflight's eyes rounded and dulled. His flanks stopped moving and he was limp now. Sharptalon leaped over the tom's dead body and looked at Lighttail.

"L-Lighttail," Sharptalon murmured. The pale tom's eyes were open and were fixed on Sharptalon now. He was alive.

Chapter 27

"I'm so sorry for your losses," Tigerstar meowed. "I should've come sooner."

"I'm sorry about Beenose dying," Squirrelstar murmured.

Sharptalon pricked his ears. Morning had turned into sunset. The sky was orange-pink. Few clouds scutted across it. The sun was sinking just behind the mountain in the distance. The rogue's had retreated, but ThunderClan was battered roughly. Squirrelstar lost another life fighting Darktail, Graystripe had been killed, most of the senior warrior were in terrible shape, and Ambertuft had died just before the battle.

Lighttail was beside Sharptalon. Herbs covered his flanks and wet moss was by his muzzle. His whiskers twitched as if he was still awake.

Bramblehawk was in terrible shape, along with Brackenclaw, Needlepaw, Jaywing, and a few other senior warriors.

The quiet sobbing of Jaywing filled the clearing, along with other cats mourning. Jaywing was crouched over her dead mate, Graystripe.

"ShadowClan will be on its way," Tigerstar meowed, flicking his tail. Tawnypelt and the rest of his Clanmates followed.

Sharptalon narrowed his eyes.

Wingkit suddenly scampered into the den, her fur standing on end. "Sharptalon! I heard and also saw the fighting! Are you ok?" She asked, racing towards him. She nuzzled his cheek.

"I'm fine," Sharptalon mumbled. He twitched his whiskers. "Has Phoenixwing had her kits?" He asked.

"Yes. Dustkit, Grasskit, Graykit, and Lilykit," Wingkit mewed, her

tiny tail sticking up. "She had a lot!" She purred.

Sharptalon smiled at the little kit. "She sure did."

"What about Ambertuft? Isn't she coming back from that border patrol?" Wingkit asked.

Sharptalon's heart broke in two. He wished it was simple to tell her. But she'd be sad for days if she found out that her foster mother had died.

"What happened to her?" Wingkit asked.

Sharptalon lifted his head weakly, pulling Wingkit closer with a paw. "I'm sorry, Wingkit, but Ambertuft is dead," he meowed.

Wingkit bristled, her tiny ears flattening. Her eyes widened in horror and disbelief. "What? No! She can't be dead!"

"She is," Sharptalon mumbled. "The rogues killed her while on patrol." His gaze shifted to the clearing, where Ambertuft's stiff body lay beside Graystripe.

Ripplewind was crouched beside his mate's body, his face buried deep into her fur. Needlepaw, despite being injured, sat with him, her eyes dull. Blazepaw and Sootpaw sat with them, along with Thistlepatch.

Sharptalon looked back at Wingkit. She was whimpering. The tiny kit had curled into a tit ball of tortoiseshell fur.

Lighttail shifted in his nest, his eyes blinking open. He glanced at Wingkit, grief shimmering in his eyes. "Wingkit?" He asked.

Wingkit looked up, her gaze shaking. "Lighttail?"

Lighttail's gaze was fixed on his daughter. "I love you."

Wingkit blinked at him. "Why are you telling me this?" She asked.

"You might lose me one day," Lighttail whined. He moved his long tail to his side. "I just wanted you to know."

Wingkit shifted her paws. She padded closer to her father and touched her tiny pink nose to his, purring slightly. "Well I love you too, Lighttail."

Peachkit scampered into the den, her tail raised. "Flamedawn!" She squeaked.

Flamedawn turned away from Bramblehawk. "Yes?"

"Can I help you with something?" Peachkit asked.

"Well you can check if all the injured cats have had food," Flamedawn suggested. "And can you please get me some marigold in the herb stocks?"

"Yes," Peachkit mewed. She scampered to the back of the den, where five holes were scooped into the dirt. She pulled a yellow flower out of one of the holes and shook out the dirt. She padded back to Flamedawn.

Flamedawn took the herb from the kit. He began to chew the petals.

Mothstripe looked at Peachkit approvingly. "You've seemed really interested in the medicine den lately. Would you like to be a medicine cat?" She asked.

Peachkit nodded in response. "I want to save my Clanmates when they're hurt or sick. I've never really wanted to fight or hunt," she admitted.

Twistedfoot's whiskers twitched with amusement. "We've got enough medicine cats already as it is," he joked. He turned to Mothstripe, his eyes rounding. "Isn't it time to bury our dead?"

Squirrelstar lifted her head from where she sat in her nest. "It is. Unfortunately we can not grieve all night. The dead bodies will attract foxes. Willowbrook's patrol reported fox scent by the Great Blossom."

Sharptalon glanced at her. He wanted to properly grieve for Ambertuft and Graystripe before finally saying goodbye.

Squirrelstar got to his paws. "I only need rest for now, not treatment. I'm well. Someone else can take my nest," she meowed. She stalked from the den, her bushy tail lashing.

Sharptalon watched as she climbed up the rocks to High-Ledge, then raised her chin.

"Cats of ThunderClan! I know it has been hard with our losses, but we must bury them now. I will give you time to say goodbye one last time. You have until the first five stars come out in the night sky," Squirrelstar announced. She retreated back into her den.

Sharptalon got to his paws shakily. Mothstripe rushed over, her feathery tail settling on his shoulders. "You must rest, Sharptalon. You were beaten pretty badly."

"Please just let me say goodbye to Ambertuft. She was my mentor incase you forgot!" Sharptalon mewed.

Mothstripe backed away. "Ok. But don't stay out too long and walk carefully," she insisted before turning away.

Sharptalon stepped from his nest. He parted back an overhanging bramble and began to make his way over to Ambertuft slowly.

Dark clouds shifted restlessly in the sky. The sun was gone and the half-moon shone dimly in the dark sky. Small stars were beginning to come out. Crickets and frogs began to chirp and the leaves of the trees rustled in the wind.

Sharptalon reached Ambertuft. He sat down, feeling his shoulders ache. But he also felt an ache in his heart. He shifted into a crouch, resting his muzzle on Ambertuft's flank. It was faintly stained with blood. Her fur had been groomed neatly.

"Thank you for being an amazing and supportive mentor," Sharptalon whispered. It was hardly a whisper actually. He winced. His voice had cracked with grief. When his mother had died, he'd hoped to never feel this intense grief ever again. But here he was, laying against his former mentor's body.

"Sharptalon! You're up?"

Sharptalon slightly jumped, hearing Stormgaze's voice behind him. He turned around slowly, seeing his mate approaching him.

"Grieving for Ambertuft?" Stormgaze's gaze was soft. She padded closer until she was beside Sharptalon. She rested her tail on his broad shoulders.

"I wish I could've helped her," Sharptalon whispered. "She deserved so much better."

"She died protecting the Clan she loved," Stormgaze mewed. "She was one of our best warriors."

"She didn't even get to see her kits become warriors," Sharptalon spat. His gaze shifted to Ambertuft's face. Her eyes were closed, her mouth hanging open slightly. Faint blood stained her chin and lips. The gash in her throat had been cleaned, but was still dark with blood.

Ferncloud, Poppyfrost, Purdy, and Thorn padded over suddenly.

"It's time to let them go for burial," Ferncloud murmured, dipping her head.

Thorn's golden tabby pelt seemed dark.

"Rest easy," Sharptalon murmured quietly to Ambertuft. He felt like her spirit was listening to his words. He backed away with the rest of his Clanmates as the four elders padded forward and carry the two dead cats.

"Let me help," Ripplewind padded forward.

Thistlepatch padded forward, touching her tail to his flank. "This is for them to do."

Ripplewind blinked at her. "You're right." He sighed and turned away, his kits gathering close to him.

"You need to go back to your nest," Stormgaze insisted, glancing at Sharptalon.

Sharptalon nuzzled his nose against his mate's cheek before turning away. He sank into his nest as he reached the medicine den. Lighttail was asleep. Wingkit and Peachkit were gone.

Flamedawn and Mothstripe were talking quietly with Twistedfoot.

"Are you fine staying here by yourself?" Mothstripe asked the tom.

"Yes. You can go to the Moon-Cave while I stay here and make sure the injured are ok," Twistedfoot meowed.

"Great. I'll make sure Squirrelstar knows." Mothstripe and Flamedawn left the den, disappearing into the darkness of the night.

Sharptalon closed his eyes, easing his breathing. He quickly fell asleep.

Chapter 28

A moon had passed since the battle. Rogue scent was still being found on the territory. Sharptalon had fully healed.

The bright sun hung in the light blue sky like a yellow leaf in a puddle of clear water. Gray clouds crossed over the sky like fish in a pond. The sound of a pebble hitting water attracted Sharptalon's attention.

"Quit, Needlepaw, you'll scare all RiverClan's prey away," Brackenclaw growled.

Needlepaw kicked another pebble into the water, lashing her tail. A scar was showing on her flank. She kicked another.

"Quit!" Brackenclaw hissed from the shore once more. "We need to hurry up and cross into ShadowClan's territory, then get to the Great Crossing, and go through WindClan's territory, and then we'll have to go to the edge of RiverClan territory and reach their camp."

"That's a lot of walking," Needlepaw sighed. She kicked another pebble into the water.

Echostrike flashed Needlepaw a sympathetic look.

"The pebbles aren't fishfood, Needlepaw," Brackenclaw sighed.

The small patrol stepped from the trees. They were in the sunlight now. Golden rays dappled the ground and brightened Brackenclaw's pelt.

The river was running fast beside them, its current tugging every pebble that Needlepaw threw into it. The stream was on their other side.

Needlepaw suddenly tripped over her paws, her screech echoing around the land. The current dragged her tail and paws.

"Needlepaw!" Brackenclaw gasped, rushing forward.

Heart pounding in his ears, Sharptalon rushed down to the river's bank. The current tugged Needlepaw again and she was dragged into the river like a dead piece of prey.

Sharptalon ran as fast as he could alongside the river, his paws kicking up pebbles. He lost sight of Needlepaw.

Echostrike was running at his heels. "She's heading towards those jutting rocks! She's going to die if she hits them!" She yowled. "The current's too fast!" She yowled.

Sharptalon looked back at her, his whiskers streaming behind him in the wind.

Brackenclaw flattened her ears, running faster.

Needlepaw's head popped up in the river. She looked dead. Her fur was dark now, wet with water, her fur plastered to her skull. She screeched in terror, but it was quickly drowned out as she was tugged back under.

Sharptalon's heart sank. Her siblings had just lost their mother. They couldn't lose their sister. He took in a deep breath and plunged in the river.

"Sharptalon-!"

Echostrike's voice was drowned out as Sharptalon went under the water. It immediately filled his ears and nose. He couldn't breathe. He clawed at the water and tried to climb up to the surface. Gray fur was beside him. Needlepaw.

Sharptalon broke the surface finally, seeing Needlepaw as well. He darted forward, grabbing her scruff. He tried as hard as he could to swim against the current, trying to get to the bank.

Brackenclaw was running along the bank, but Echostrike was nowhere to be seen. Had she jumped in too?

Sharptalon and Needlepaw were approaching the rocks faster. Some

were flat, some sharp, but impact would kill them.

A familiar scent wreathed around Sharptalon suddenly. A transparent shape appeared at his side, floating on the water. Her blue eyes shimmered.

"Be strong, Sharptalon," Fluffypelt whispered. Stars twinkled in her white fur.

Sharptalon felt energy flood around him. *My mother... She's... she...*

"Sharptalon!" Brackenclaw yowled.

Fluffypelt's spirit was gone.

Sharptalon yowled and swam against the current, feeling a cat under him suddenly. RiverClan scent wreathed around him. Was that a RiverClan cat?

With Needlepaw still in his jaws, he swam to the left against the current. Finally, his paws touched sand and climbed onto the pebbly bank, water dripping from his fur and whiskers.

Reedwhisker, RiverClan's deputy, appeared from the water. He shook out his wet pelt, flattening his ears. His black fur was glossy in the sunshine.

"What were you thinking?" He hissed.

Brackenclaw rushed to them. "What about Echostrike? Where is she? She jumped in the river!" She cried.

Reedwhisker turned, his ears pricking forward.

Two other RiverClan cats slid from the water, their fur dripping water: Mistyfoot and Hollowflight.

"Reedwhisker, the current is too strong, we can't swim down there," Mistyfoot meowed.

Reedwhisker turned and ran down the bank. "That cat is going to die! Help me!"

Sharptalon got to his paws. Needlepaw's breathing was shallow. He grabbed her scruff, helping her to her paws. She whimpered.

"Ambertuft.... I saw her.... she said it wasn't my time," Needlepaw murmured, her eyes closing.

"Don't worry, we'll get you to a medicine cat soon, I promise," Sharptalon meowed. He looked at Brackenclaw. "Stay with her, I'll help Reedwhisker." He shook out his pelt and raced off toward the rocks.

A limp pale brown body was laying limply on the rocks, her fur dark with water. Blood pooled around her head.

Sharptalon gasped as he peered forward. There was a gash in her head, her eyes staring blankly at the sky.

"Great StarClan, what do we do?" Reedwhisker growled, lashing his tail. He looked up at Sharptalon's approach, flattening his ears. "What made you think it was a good idea to get that close to the river?" He hissed.

Sharptalon bristled. "It's not my fault! Needlepaw was at the river's edge kicking pebbles and then she got dragged in when she lost her footing!" He hissed angrily.

"Echostrike's not dead," Mistyfoot sniffed. "She hit the rocks pretty hard though."

"Yeah, no kidding, like I can't see all that blood!" Sharptalon growled.

Reedwhisker unsheathed his claws. "Then tell me this, why were you all walking by the river in the first place?" He asked.

"To come and warn you about the rogues. They attacked our camp a moon ago and a warrior and elder was killed," Sharptalon explained, his tail lashing. "And that's why Needlepaw was kicking pebbles into the water; she's been depressed ever since her mother died." I hope they understand.

Reedwhisker sheathed his claws, slight sympathy showing in his

eyes.

Echostrike suddenly jerked. She coughed up water, her paws trembling. She looked up, bristling, her eyes wide with terror. "W-who are you? What do you want?"

Sharptalon gasped, his heart skipping a beat. He blinked at the she-cat in confusion. Had she lost her memory when she collided with those rocks? Had she really hit them that hard?

Reedwhisker's eyes rounded. "It's ok," he soothed. "We're going to get you to a medicine cat and they'll fix you up," he promised.

"W-what?" Echostrike whimpered. She backed up to the edge. "Where am I?"

"It doesn't matter. We're going to help you," Mistyfoot mewed. She padded forward.

"S-S-stay away! I don't know who you are!" Echostrike hissed. She lashed her tail and unsheathed her claws, her eyes wide with horror and panic.

"We aren't going to hurt you, Echostrike," Sharptalon meowed. He padded forward gently.

"Echostrike? Who is that?" Echostrike asked, confusion flashing in her gaze.

"That's your name," Sharptalon meowed. "Your name is Echostrike."

Echostrike blinked at him. "Is it really?" She asked, her voice shaky. "I'm Echostrike," she whispered, repeating it over and over again. "W-who are you?"

"My name is Sharptalon. I was traveling with you. We were friends," Sharptalon explained. *I hope she can remember this at least*.

"Friends? Sharptalon?" Echostrike asked. She seemed to relax a bit. "I-if you're my friend, you have to help me, please. It hurts, it hurts so bad!" She cried. Blood trickled into her eyes from the gash on her forehead.

"Don't worry, Echostrike, I'll help you," Sharptalon soothed. *At least she trusts me now*.

Brackenclaw rushed over, Needlepaw leaning on her shoulder. "Sharptalon! We need a medicine cat right away!" She gasped as she saw Echostrike. "Oh, Echostrike, what happened to you?"

"Who are you?" Echostrike asked, her words becoming dreary.

"We need to get to WindClan's camp. It's the closest medicine cat you'll have," Reedwhisker meowed. "Mistyfoot, Hollowflight. Go back to ThunderClan with Brackenclaw and tell Squirrelstar that her cats will be resting in WindClan camp for now."

Chapter 29

The scent of heather was sharp on the strong breeze, overwhelming Sharptalon. The sun's heat was bearing down on them now since there were no trees to shade the land.

Sharptalon trudged alongside Echostrike, who was still trembling. Reedwhisker was helping Needlepaw. They were crossing the moor, heading towards WindClan's camp. They didn't have time to wait for a patrol.

Echostrike's fur was stained with blood from her wound, and she seemed to be dizzy, stumbling everytime she walked.

"I think I see a patrol," Reedwhisker meowed. On the hill, the black figures of four cats was running towards their patrol.

"They're coming our way," Sharptalon murmured. He was tired. As the WindClan patrol got closer, Sharptalon could make them out.

The dark ginger-brown tabby tom with amber eyes and white splotches was Flashfire, a young warrior. Beside him was Sunstrike, a tortoiseshell she-cat with a white mark on her forward. On Flashfire's other side was the large golden tom, Eaglefeather, along with his apprentice, Cloudpaw, a light brown tabby tom.

"Now I know I ain't tripping," Flashfire sighed. "RiverClan and ThunderClan together? What's giving on?" He glanced at Sharptalon.

"We need help," Reedwhisker meowed, flicking his tail to Echostrike and then Needlepaw.

Flashfire glanced at Echostrike, seeing that her head was bleeding.

"Great StarClan! What happened to her?" He asked.

"There's no time to explain, let us go to your camp to see Kestrelflight and Rabbittail. Echostrike and Needlepaw need help," Reedwhisker meowed.

Flashfire exchanged a sad look with Eaglefeather and the rest of his patrol.

"Kestrelflight passed away two days ago," Flashfire murmured. He closed his eyes, taking in a deep breath. "But Rabbittail can treat your Clanmates."

"I'm sorry," Sharptalon murmured. "We lost a warrior and an elder too last moon," he meowed, remembering how Ambertuft's throat was torn.

"I'm sorry to hear that," Flashfire meowed, sympathy showing in his eyes. "We'll take you."

"Thyme cures shock," Rabbittail explained. "It will help you."

Echostrike glanced down.

Rabbittail moved two purple-blue berries toward Needlepaw. "Here's some juniper berries to help with your breathing, Needlepaw."

Needlepaw licked up the two berries and chewed them up. She slouched over in her nest, curling up.

Rabbittail grabbed a yellow flower from his herb store and began to chew the petals. He spat them out on his paw and glanced and Echostrike. "Did you eat the thyme yet?"

Echostrike was trembling. "I don't know if I should."

"It's good. It will help you calm down," Rabbittail explained, his whiskers twitching.

"You could be lying, whatever your name is. I don't trust cats I don't know," Echostrike growled.

Sharptalon padded closer to his Clanmate, glancing at her. "Please, Echostrike, eat the thyme. It'll calm you down," he meowed.

Echostrike looked and at him, then back at Rabbittail. "I guess I'll eat it," she mewed. She scooped the small, sticky leaves to her mouth and began to chew on them.

Rabbittail then began to spread the marigold poultice on Echostrike's head wound.

Echostrike flinched back.

"Calm down, Echostrike, he's trying to help you," Sharptalon soothed.

"Help me with what?" Echostrike asked.

"With your pain," Sharptalon answered. "Let him put that on your wound. It might sting, but he's not trying to hurt you."

"What's his name?" Echostrike asked, her eyes flashing.

"His name is Rabbittail. He's a medicine cat, which means he heals cats," Sharptalon explained. It felt like he was training an apprentice.

"Rabbittail?" She echoed.

Rabbittail nodded and spread the marigold juices onto Echostrike's head wound. After that, he turned around, grabbing a pawful of cobwebs. He placed them onto the wound.

Sharptalon blinked at Rabbittail. I have to ask his something. "Rabbittail, can I talk to you for a second?" He asked.

Rabbittail blinked at him. "Yeah, sure. What do you need?" He asked.

Sharptalon blinked at him, flicking his tail. "Let's talk outside," he whispered.

Sharptalon padded from the den, which was two boulders together,

along with heather weaved with bracken around it. Rabbittail padded at his side.

The sky was darkening as the sun was beginning to set behind the mountains. The clouds were orange and the moon was beginning to rise in the opposite direction of the sun.

Sharptalon stopped, sitting down.

Rabbittail sat down beside them. "What?" He asked.

"You haven't received any visions or messages from StarClan about something... sharp... have you?" Sharptalon asked.

Rabbittail's eyes flashed with surprise. "Uh, no," he murmured.

"No?" Sharptalon narrowed his eyes with suspicion. Rabbittail looked as if he knew something Sharptalon didn't. "You saw something, didn't you?"

Rabbittail avoided his gaze. "Ok, I do. But I don't know I if should share it." He wrapped his tail around his paws.

"You can tell me. I just want to know. Flamedawn received a prophecy about this," Sharptalon added, his whiskers twitching.

Rabbittail got to his paws suddenly, bristling. "You're a murderer!" He hissed. "StarClan sent me a vision of you killing Kestrelflight!" He growled.

Sharptalon's fur spiked. He wanted to sink his claws into the grass, but he forced himself to remain calm. "What do you mean?"

"You know. You were going to kill my mentor. That's because some cat wanted you to," Rabbittail hissed. "And you would've if I hadn't of killed him myself."

Allegiances 4

ThunderClan:

Leader: Squirrelstar- Dark ginger she-cat with green eyes and a white paw

Deputy: Ivypool- Silver-gray tabby she-cat

Medicine cats:

Mothstripe- Pretty golden tabby she-cat with a long, fluffy tail

Twistedfoot- Brown tom with a twisted paw and green eyes

Flamedawn- Dark ginger tom with blue eyes and white paws

Warriors:

Jaywing- Gray tabby she-cat with blue eyes and a torn ear, apprentice- Beechpaw

Mossheart- Black and silver she-cat with green eyes

Foxleap- reddish-brown tabby tom with green eyes

Rosepetal- Dark cream she-cat

Toadstep- Black and white tom

Sparkpelt- Flame-colored tabby she-cat with green eyes

Birchfall- Light brown tabby tom with amber eyes

Brackenclaw- White she-cat with golden splotches, apprentice- Needlepaw

Molefur- Dark cream tom with brown paws, apprentice- Blazepaw

Whitewing- Small snowy white she-cat with green eyes

Berrynose- Cream colored tom with a thick, short stump for a tail

Blossomfall- Tortoiseshell and white she-cat with petal-shaped white patches, apprentice- Sootpaw

Crowfeather- Dark-smoky, almost black tom with blue eyes, formerly WindClan

Bramblehawk- Dark brown tom with black stripes and yellow eyes

Firestorm- Fire-colored tom with blue eyes and a gray ear-tip

Thistlepatch- Gray and white she-cat with strange violet eyes

Willowbrook- Gray and white tabby she-cat

Moonshine- Black and silver-white she-cat, apprentice- Rookpaw

Palewhisker- Black and white she-cat

Smallfeather- Pale yellow small tom with blue eyes

Breezestorm- White tom with gray paws

Ripplewind- Cream-white tom with a dark mask-like pattern around his eyes

Hawkfoot- Muscular brown tabby tom with amber eyes

Cloudspark- Fluffy white she-cat with yellow eyes and a torn ear

Mistfang- Dark gray tom with green eyes and a silver chest and

paws, formerly rogue

Cherryflight- Dark ginger she-cat with amber eyes and gray spots and white paws, formerly rogue

Petal- Ginger she-cat with green eyes and white petal-shaped spots on her back, formerly rogue

Echostrike- Pale brown she-cat with green eyes and a white paw

Lighttail- Pale yellow tom with a long tail and yellow eyes

Sharptalon- Large brown tom with a thick-tail and amber eyes and a torn ear

Stalkfire- Broad-shouldered, tufty-furred, flame-colored tom with green eyes

Apprentices:

Beechpaw- Pale golden-cream tabby tom

Rookpaw- Very dark gray tom with blue eyes

Blazepaw- Short-furred golden tabby tom

Sootpaw- Fluffy dark gray she-cat

Needlepaw- Spiky-furred silver-gray she-cat

Queens:

Coriander- Tortoiseshell and white she-cat with amber eyes (Nursery helper)

Leafpool- Brown tabby she-cat with a white chest and paws and amber eyes, former medicine cat (Mother to Crowfeather's kits: Auburnkit and Peachkit, fostering Wingkit)

Phoenixwing- Slender, long-legged flame-colored she-cat with green eyes (Mother to Hawkfoot's kits: Dustkit, Grasskit, Graykit, and Lilykit)

Stormgaze- Gray tabby she-cat with beautiful green eyes (Expecting Sharptalon's kits)

Elders:

Thorn- Golden tabby tom with scratches across his face, blind in one eye

Purdy- Mottled, dark brown tabby tom

Ferncloud- Gray she-cat with green eyes

Flower- Very old cream-white she-cat

Poppyfrost- Dappled, pale tortoiseshell and white she-cat with a small stub for a tail

WindClan:

Leader: Gorsestar- Mottled pale gray tabby tom with blue eyes, apprentice- Patchpaw

Deputy: Doveclaw- Gray she-cat with white paws and blue eyes and a torn ear

Medicine cats:

Rabbittail- Light brown tom with green eyes and a short tail

Warriors:

Eaglefeather- Golden tom with green eyes and a scarred muzzle, apprentice- Cloudpaw

Antpelt- Lithe brown tom with one black ear

Breezepelt- Black tom with amber eyes

Heathertail- Light brown tabby she-cat with heather-blue eyes

Sunstrike- Tortoiseshell she-cat with a large white mark on her forehead

Swallowtail- Dark gray she-cat

Boulderfur- Large pale gray tom

Larkwing- Pale brown tabby she-cat, apprentice- Ravenpaw

Sedgewhisker- Light brown tabby she-cat

Slightfoot- Black tom with a flash of white on his chest

Thornstem- Gold-brown tom with golden eyes

Windflower- Small light brown tabby she-cat

Smokehaze- Gray she-cat

Brindlewing- Mottled brown she-cat

Flashfire- Dark ginger-brown tabby tom with amber eyes and white splotches, formerly rogue

Sparkfur- Spiky-furred ginger she-cat with green eyes, formerly rogue

Apprentices:

Ravenpaw- Black tom with white ears

Patchpaw- White she-cat patched with splotches of gold and black

Cloudpaw- Light brown tabby tom

Queens:

Heathertail- Light brown tabby she-cat with heather-blue eyes (Expecting Breezepelt's kits)

RiverClan:

Leader: Flowerstar- Tortoiseshell and white she-cat with green eyes

Deputy: Reedwhisker- Slender black tom

Medicine cats:

Mothwing- Dappled dark golden she-cat

Willowshine- Sleek thick-furred dark gray tabby she-cat

Sapbriar- Milky-white she-cat with gray paws

Warriors:

Mistyfoot- Blue-gray she-cat with blue eyes

Rust- Large dark brown tom with amber eyes

Mintfur- Light gray tabby tom, apprentice- Breezepaw

Icewing- White she-cat with blue eyes, apprentice- Nightpaw

Lakeheart- Gray tabby she-cat

Pebblefoot- Mottled pale gray tom

Rushtail- Light brown tabby tom

Hollowflight- Dark brown tabby tom

Pineshade- Dark ginger tom with a black splotch on his back

Curlfeather- Pale brown she-cat

Podlight- Sturdy gray and white tom

Mallownose- Light brown tom

Petalfur- Gray and white she-cat with amber eyes

Lizardtail- Light brown tom

Beetleshell- Black tom with brown paws

Brackenpelt- Tortoiseshell she-cat, apprentice- Briarpaw

Owlnose- Brown tabby tom, apprentice- Dawnpaw

Jayclaw- Gray tom, apprentice- Alderpaw

Apprentices:

Nightpaw- Dark gray she-cat with blue eyes

Breezepaw- Brown and white she-cat

Briarpaw- Black she-cat with brown paws and blue eyes

Dawnpaw- Light brown she-cat with green eyes

Alderpaw- Dark brown tom with a black splotch over his eye

Queens:

Brightmorning- White she-cat with blue eyes (Mother to Jayclaw's kits: Pigeonkit and Flintkit)

Iceriver- Fluffy white she-cat with ice-blue eyes (Expecting Reedwhisker's kits)

Elders:

Duskpelt- Brown tabby she-cat

ShadowClan:

Leader: Tigerstar- Big dark tiger-striped tabby tom with amber eyes and a torn ear

Deputy: Tawnypelt- Pale tortoiseshell she-cat

Medicine cat:

Flametail- Flame-colored tom with blue eyes, apprentice- Turtlepaw

Ravenbreeze- Small black she-cat

Warriors:

Ebonyfur- Black tom with green eyes, apprentice- Adderpaw

Dawnpelt- Cream-furred she-cat

Scorchfur- Dark gray tom

Applefur- Mottled brown she-cat, apprentice- Slatepaw

Pinenose- Black she-cat

Sparrowtail- Large brown tabby tom

Ferretclaw- Cream and gray tom, apprentice- Puddlepaw

Spikefur- Dark brown tom with tufty fur on his head

Stonewing- White tom

Strikestone- Brown-striped tabby tom

Shrewfoot- Gray she-cat with black feet

Cloverfoot- Gray tabby she-cat

Yarrowleaf- Ginger she-cat with yellow eyes

Berryheart- Black and white she-cat

Juniperclaw- Sleek black tom, apprentice- Shadepaw

Crowclaw- Black tom with yellow eyes, apprentice- Birchpaw

Smoketail- Dark gray tabby she-cat with bright green eyes, apprentice- Lionpaw

Needletail- Silver-gray she-cat with green eyes and a white chest, apprentice- Leafpaw

Darkspots- Ginger tom dappled with black flecks

Skyfrost- Sleek, light gray tom, formerly loner

Apprentices:

Turtlepaw- Small tortoiseshell she-cat with a dull white chest

Leafpaw- Brown tabby she-cat with black paws

Shadepaw- Dark gray she-cat

Adderpaw- Dark brown tabby tom with a pale gray underbelly

Birchpaw- Beige tom

Slatepaw- Sleek gray tom

Lionpaw- Yellow she-cat with amber eyes

Puddlepaw- Brown tom with white splotches

Pebblepaw- Mottled gray tabby tom with black splotches

Nettlepaw- Spiky-furred black tom

Queens:

Snowbird- Pure white she-cat (Mother to Scorchfur's kits: Gullkit, Conekit, and Frondkit)

Grassheart- Pale brown tabby she-cat (Mother to Stonewing's kits: Flowerkit, Whorlkit, and Snakekit)

Elders:

Smokefoot- Black tom

Kinkfur- Dark gray tabby she-cat with long fur that sticks out in all angles

Ratscar- Dark brown tom with a long scar across his back

Rogues/DarkClan:

Leader: Darktail- Big white tom with black spots around his blue eyes and a long black tail

Deputy: Rain- Long-furred gray tom with green eyes

Medicine cat: Arch- Brown tabby tom with a white belly and paws

Fighters/Hunters:

Crowfrost- Black and white tom

Redwillow- Mottled brown and ginger tom

Moldclaw- Large black tom with a ginger patch on muzzle and chin and with amber eyes

Goldensmoke- Pale golden-brown she-cat with blue eyes

Lightningstrike- Mottled gray tabby tom with amber eyes

Shimmer- Black and white she-cat

Moon- Silver she-cat

Nettle- Brown tabby tom with long, spiky fur

Raven- Long-furred black she-cat

Roach- Silver-gray tom

Gravel- Slender gray tom

Sleekwhisker- Golden she-cat with yellow eyes, training Stripe

Snake- Golden-brown she-cat with yellow-green eyes

Thistle- Muscular gray tom with blue eyes

Snowbreeze- White tom with blue eyes, formerly ThunderClan

Stripe- Gray tabby tom

Reed- Brown tabby tom with green eyes

Minnow- Silver tabby she-cat

Ice Shadow- Large, broad-shouldered white tom with blue eyes and a black stripe above his nose

Shredfang- Mottled ginger tom

Slateclaw- Dappled silver she-cat

Splotch- White she-cat with gray splotches

Dart- Lean black tom

Ninx- Lean, dark blueish-black she-cat with yellow eyes

Tyan- Large, dark blueish-black tom with green eyes and a white belly

Viper- Small, skinny brown tom with striking yellow eyes

Badger- Black tom with a white stripe running down his back

Mothers:

Frostheart- White she-cat with yellow eyes and a feathery tail, formerly ThunderClan (Mother to Falconflight's kits: Snow, Burntkit, Tabby, Featherkit, and Pearlkit)

Snow- White she-cat (Expecting Thistle's kits)

Chapter 30

Sharptalon gasped in shock. This cat was crazy!

Rabbittail's ears flattened. "I wouldn't allow your filthy paws to get on my mentor, so I killed him myself. I put him out of his misery anyway.... Kestrelflight was sick and was suffering everyday," Rabbittail sighed.

Sharptalon blinked at him. "What proof do you have that I was going to kill him?" He growled.

"I saw Wolffang with you at the gathering. I knew what you were feeling," Rabbittail growled. "But you didn't have the intention to put him out of his suffering, you had the intention to murder him."

Sharptalon bristled, unsheathing his claws. "How can you see Wolffang?" He hissed.

"I'm not sure," Rabbittail answered. "But I did receive a message from StarClan: The sharper the talons are, the worse the damage will be."

Sharptalon glared at the tom.

Breezepelt came from around the rock, flattening his ears. "What are you two arguing about?" He hissed.

"Nothing," Sharptalon growled quickly, his thoughts racing. Rabbittail was out of his mind. *I will come back and kill him. He's a danger now that he knows what I intended to do.*

"How is Crowfeather doing?" Breezepelt's question jerked Sharptalon back to the present.

"He's fine," Sharptalon answered quickly.

"Typical Crowfeather. Abandons his son and his Clan for a stupid ThunderClan she-cat," Breezepelt growled, stalking off.

Rabbittail glared at Sharptalon still. "You should leave now. You are well enough to go back to your Clan."

"I'm not. You could kill my Clanmates while I'm away," Sharptalon growled. Echostrike had lost her memory and Needlepaw was just an apprentice. They would easily die to Rabbittail, a full grown tom.

"You think just because I killed Kestrelflight, I'd kill your two friends? You're pathetic," Rabbittail growled. He turned around quickly, stalking off.

Sharptalon stared after him, a growl rising in his throat. He didn't trust this tom. He stalked back to the medicine den. Echostrike and Needlepaw were asleep. He lay down by Echostrike, his thoughts whirling. After what seemed like forever, he finally fell asleep.

Two days had passed since being in WindClan's camp. Sharptalon was crouched down beside Echostrike, eating a rabbit. Needlepaw was sitting beside him. She'd been very quiet since first coming here.

Sharptalon took another bite of rabbit. He glanced at Needlepaw. "Are you hungry?" He asked.

Needlepaw's head turned toward him, her dull eyes locking with his. She didn't say anything, just sat there.

Sharptalon tore a small bite of flesh from the rabbit's flank. He pawed it over to Needlepaw. He hoped she'd eat it. But he noticed something else strange about her. She seemed really tired. A cut was at the tip of her ear.

Sharptalon turned away from her, shaking suspicion from his thoughts. She hadn't been fighting in three days. How could a cut in her ear-tip look that fresh? Sharptalon's whiskers twitched. Was she training in the Dark Forest?

Paw steps behind Sharptalon made him turn. He saw Gorsestar

padding up to them, his eyes shimmering.

"Greetings, Sharptalon, Echostrike, and Needlepaw. Are you all well enough to travel now?" Gorsestar asked, his tail-tip flicking.

"I am," Sharptalon answered. Needlepaw looked well enough too.

"My head hurts... G-Gorsestar," Echostrike mumbled. "I don't want to leave my Clanmates."

"Your Clanmates will be traveling with you, Echostrike," Gorsestar reminded her.

Echostrike glanced at him, her green eyes rounding. "But aren't these my Clanmates?" She asked, flicking her tail at Sharptalon and Needlepaw, and then the WindClan cats in camp.

Gorsestar's whiskers twitched, his eyes rounding with sympathy. "Echostrike, your Clanmates are ThunderClan, not WindClan."

"Then why have I been living here?" Echostrike asked, her tail flicking. She got to her paws. "I hardly know these WindClan cats but I know them better than anyone else besides Sharptalon and Needlepaw."

Gorsestar shook his head. "You may not remember your actual Clanmates, but even if you can't remember them, WindClan is not your home."

"T-then... What is my home? Did I do something bad? Did I be.... disloyal to Wi-WindClan? Is that why they don't like me?" Echostrike's voice cracked with sadness, her eyes becoming wet.

"No, no, not at all. You've never been disloyal," Sharptalon insisted, getting to his paws. "ThunderClan is your real home, where you became an apprentice. And then you trained for many moons and became a warrior," he explained.

Echostrike glanced at him, her eyes rounding. "I don't remember any of it," she sniffed.

"That's why you have Clanmates. They'll help you remember

everything. Your parents and your younger siblings will help to remind you."

"I have kin?" Echostrike murmured, looking lost. Sadness showed in her eyes. "I can't even remember their names."

"Your mother is Phoenixwing and your father is Hawkfoot," Sharptalon reminded her. "Remember how you first met me?" He asked. Sharptalon suddenly remembered that she'd lost all her memory. "Well, I mean, you first met me when I was a kit."

"I... I can't... I don't.. remember anything," Echostrike mewed. Her fur stood on end suddenly, fear showing in her eyes. "What will my Clanmates do if I can't remember anything?" She asked. "Will they throw me out for being useless?"

"No!" Sharptalon gasped. "You'll just have to... re-remember everything important in your life. It'll be hard, but it'll be possible," Sharptalon insisted. *Not unless Squirrelstar just makes her an elder.*

"I guess you're right," Echostrike sighed, her tail drooping.

"Sharptalon? Are you ok hunting with Needlepaw?" Gorsestar asked. "You two are well, and I want you to at least be doing something useful as long as you're here."

"I don't mind," Sharptalon meowed. The sunlight was bright, warming his pelt. Trees weren't here, but maybe he could hunt.

Needlepaw stood up, her eyes glowing.

"Let's see if we can catch anything," Sharptalon meowed. He padded over to the camp entrance, Needlepaw by his side. *This is the perfect time to ask her.*

Further away from camp, Sharptalon crouched, thrush scent touching his nose. Needlepaw crouched beside him, her ears pricked forward.

Sharptalon spotted the thrush pecking at the ground, its wings fluttering behind it. It was trying to pull something from the ground.

"It looks stuck," Needlepaw whispered very quietly.

Sharptalon narrowed his eyes, seeing that the thrush's beak was stuck in the ground, its head pressed to the dirt. The thrush fluttered its wings. "Do you want to catch it?"

"I've never caught a thrush before." Needlepaw's gaze was locked onto the bird. "And it would seem like cheating if I caught it. It's stuck."

Sharptalon flattened his ears against the wind. "Well I'm catching it. Gorsestar probably wants us to bring at least something home."

"Well you go do you," Needlepaw mewed quietly.

Sharptalon crept forward from the heather, his paw steps careful. He then shot forward. The thrush turned towards him, its eyes wide with horror. Sharptalon lunged forward, his claws catching the bird, then bit the thrush's neck, feeling it fall limp in his jaws.

Needlepaw padded over, eyeing the thrush. "Well, we've caught something."

Sharptalon dug a small hole in the ground, then placed the thrush inside. He covered it up. "We'll come back for it," he mewed. *I have to ask her.* Sharptalon glanced toward Needlepaw, his eyes locking with hers. "Needlepaw."

Needlepaw blinked at him, her ears pricking forward. A gust of wind blew through her fur. "What?"

Sharptalon's whiskers twitched. "Your dreams... have you been visiting a Dark Forest cat?"

Needlepaw narrowed her eyes. "Why are you asking me that? Are you accusing me of being disloyal?" She hissed.

"No!" Sharptalon growled. "I just wanted to know if you trained with the Dark Forest in your dreams," he explained.

"Would you tell any cat if I answered?" Needlepaw asked, her whiskers twitching.

"No," Sharptalon replied. "I train in the Dark Forest."

Needlepaw's eyes widened. "I never thought a strong warrior like you would train there!" She gasped, surprise lighting her gaze. "But... yes, I train there too."

Sharptalon pricked his ears forward. "Who's your mentor?" He asked.

"Well, Hawkfrost has been training me. A-and... I saw Falconflight there," Needlepaw mewed. "Why is a rogue there?"

"Because he used to be ThunderClan," Sharptalon explained. "Wolffang is training me."

"Is there any other cat that trains there?" Needlepaw asked.

"Sparkpelt, Mistfang, Breezepelt, and Spikefur. But now Scorchfur, Owlnose, Yarrowleaf, and Darkspots are training there," Sharptalon meowed, flicking his tail. "Some for revenge reasons, some just because they like the training."

"I like the training and I want revenge. I want to kill the rogue that killed my mother," Needlepaw growled, sinking her claws into the dirt.

"Rain," Sharptalon corrected. "Darktail's deputy," he added.

Needlepaw lashed her tail. "Why are you training there?"

"Revenge on my father and sister. But... Rain killed my mother too," Sharptalon mewed. Before Needlepaw could reply, he quickly mewed, "We should go back to camp."

Chapter 31

"Cloudpaw, Ravenpaw, and Patchpaw, step forward."

Sharptalon was sitting with Echostrike and Needlepaw, watching as Gorsestar was about to make three apprentices into warriors.

"WindClan hardly ever has apprentices," Needlepaw commented, licking her paw.

Sharptalon twitched his whiskers.

"I was Patchpaw's mentor, so I can inform that she is ready to become a warrior. She passed her assessment nicely," Gorsestar purred. "Eaglefeather, are you sure that Cloudpaw is ready to become a warrior?" He asked.

"Yes, he is ready," Eaglefeather meowed, dipping his head.

"Larkwing, is Ravenpaw ready to become a warrior?" Gorestar asked.

"Yes, he is very much ready," Larkwing answered, dipping her head.

Gorsestar turned to Patchpaw, Cloudpaw, and Ravenpaw, his eyes shimmering with pride. "I, Gorsestar, leader of WindClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these apprentices. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as a warriors in their turn."

Patchpaw's tail lifted in excitement.

"Patchpaw, Cloudpaw, and Ravenpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your lives?" Gorsestar asked them.

"I do," Patchpaw purred.

"I do," Cloudpaw meowed, puffing out his chest.

"I do," Ravenpaw meowed, lifting his chin.

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior names. Patchpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Patchshade. StarClan honors your courage and loyalty, and we welcome you as a full warrior of WindClan," Gorsestar meowed proudly.

Patchshade leaned forward and licked his shoulder, purring.

As the new warrior stepped back, Gorsestar turned to Cloudpaw. "Cloudpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Clouddust. StarClan honors your quick-thinking and skill, and we welcome you as a full warrior of WindClan," Gorsestar meowed.

Clouddust leaned forward proudly, licking his leader's shoulder.

Gorsestar finally turned to Ravenpaw. "Ravenpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Ravenstorm. StarClan honors your skill and kindness, and we welcome you as a full warrior of WindClan."

Ravenstorm leaned forward to lick Gorsestar's shoulder, his fur rippling.

"Patchshade! Clouddust! Ravenstorm!" The Clan cheered.

Sharptalon saw Windflower and Slightfoot rush forward, greeting their kits with excited purrs.

Needlepaw sighed beside him. "I wonder when we get to go home," she puffed.

"I guess when Echostrike is feeling better," Sharptalon murmured. This morning, the she-cat had been complaining of a head-ache and had been claiming that she'd felt dizzy.

"Don't forget to sit vigil tonight," Slightfoot reminded his kits.

Ravenstorm blinked at him. "But why? Sitting vigil isn't very important."

Sharptalon was surprised. This tom seemed to be against vigils.

Slightfoot bristled. "It's for guarding the Clan at night to protect your Clanmates. You're telling me that that isn't important to you?" He growled, lashing his tail.

"I'm sure he meant something else," Windflower soothed. "I can tell that you're tired, Ravenstorm. Get something to eat and then rest." She padded past him, brushing her tail along his flank.

Ravenstorm sighed, flattening his ears. He padded past his father, his tail-tip flicking.

Patchshade and Clouddust watched after him, their eyes rounding with concern.

"Pay no attention to him," Slightfoot meowed. He touched his nose to his son's and daughter's cheek. "I'm happy for all of you."

Sharptalon watched as the black tom walked away towards his mate. He felt slightly jealous, wishing his father had been like that. Sharptalon then shook his thoughts. No, I shouldn't be jealous. If my father had been nicer, I wouldn't been the way I am now.

"Sharptalon, Echostrike, Needlepaw," Gorsestar called.

Sharptalon was forced back into the present as he heard Gorsestar's call.

"Sharptalon, would you mind joining a patrol?" Gorsestar asked, his blue eyes shimmering.

"I don't mind," Sharptalon sighed.

"Breezepelt, Sunstrike, and Clouddust are waiting for you at the entrance."

Sharptalon stumbled into his nest beside Echostrike. He'd hunted all day long until nightfall. He curled up for sleep, closing his eyes.

While on Breezepelt's patrol, he'd talked with the amber-eyed tom about the Dark Forest. Now Sharptalon finally felt himself falling into sleep. Darkness closed his vision.

Sharptalon blinked open his eyes. He was in the Dark Forest. The familiar scents of dead plants and mist swirled around him.

"Sharptalon!"

Sharptalon turned around, seeing Sparkpelt, Mistfang, Breezepelt, Scorchfur, Spikefur, Yarrowleaf, Owlnose, and Darkspots. He also spotted Needlepaw and Ravenstorm.

"Ravenstorm?" Sharptalon meowed in surprise.

"I just now woke up here," Ravenstorm meowed.

Mapleshade slid from the dark shadows. "You're here because you're tired of Clan rules, right?" She purred.

Ravenstorm flattened his ears. "Yes. The Clans are always trying to force these rules onto us: No eating prey for yourself after you've just caught it, no mates outside your Clan, medicine cats can't have mates, you can't kill another cat in battle unless you have no choice, and all this other stupid crap," Ravenstorm growled. "Why can't we just make our own rules?"

Brokenstar and Hawkfrost padded from the darkness suddenly.

"Join the rogues if you want to live a free life," Brokenstar insisted.

Crowstar slid from the darkness, Silk at his side. "The rogues live by their own rules. They can eat prey whenever the want, sleep whenever and wherever they want, have whatever mate they want, and they can kill any time they want to," he meowed, lashing his black tail. "Once you join the rogues, they'll be more powerful than ever and they can take over the Clans. And once the Dark Forest breaks free, we will join the rogues and get rid of the Clans for once and for all," Crowstar finished, his dark blue eyes shimmering.

Silk nodded in agreement. "Ashstar started this stupid war. But since he isn't here anymore, we can freely kill off his kin."

Sharptalon flattened his ears. "I'm his kin."

"But you're different than his kin. You're a lot more fiercer, a lot more hungry for blood and revenge." Wolffang slid from the shadows, his tail flicking. "I was Ashstar's son and I'm a lot more different from him."

Mistfang blinked. "I'm his kin too."

"And me," Needlepaw meowed, her green eyes shimmering.

Wolffang looked around. "Falconflight is part of Ashstar's kin too. And look where he ended up."

"But his father is here too," Brokenstar meowed. He looked around, his whiskers twitching. "Dark Forest cats, come out!" He yowled.

Silverhawk and Sparrowfeather stepped from the shadows, their eyes shimmering.

Rowandust and Falconflight stepped from the shadows, claws unsheathed.

Russetstar, Kindle, and Starblaze padded from the shadows, stopping beside Silk and Crowstar.

Maggottail and Houndleap padded from the shadows, their pelts looking see-through. Shredtail and Rushtooth came out after them.

Snowtuft, Clawface, and Darkstripe padded from the shadows.

Sharptalon looked around. There were twenty Dark Forest cats that surroundded him and the trainees.

The last of the cats padded from the shadows.

Brokenstar lifted his chin. "If only Tigerstar and Thistleclaw were still here," he sighed.

Hawkfrost glanced at him. "We need to decide on a leader and deputy."

"Hawkheart is our medicine cat. I will be the leader," Brokenstar meowed. His eyes blazed with fury. Turning to Hawkfrost, he meowed. "You will be my deputy." He then turned to Ripplestar. " And you will be the second leader."

Hawkheart padded from the shadows now, his ears flattened. Ripplestar was at his side. "We should take an oath of loyalty to make sure our trainees are loyal," he hissed.

"Let's out everyone into a group first," Ripplestar meowed. "We should have all our other leaders separate from our warriors."

"If you insist," Brokenstar meowed. "Leaders! Separate yourselves from our warriors."

Darkstar, a black she-cat, padded towards Crowstar and Russetstar, who were heading towards a tall rotten tree. Oakstar followed them.

"Before we take the oath," Brokenstar began. "We have something we'd like to try."

Chapter 32

"The time has come where we will try to bring back our faded ones."

Sharptalon's heart pounced in his throat. What did that mean?

Brokenstar nodded to Hawkheart, who padded forward.

"Once our faded come back, we will be stronger than ever," Hawkheart meowed. "But to bring back our faded ones, we must sacrifice someone."

His last two words dropped like a stone in the silent clearing.

"A sacrifice?" Sparkpelt echoed, her eyes rounded with confusion.

"Not from you, but a StarClan cat. We can sneak into StarClan and kill one of them," Hawkheart meowed. "Houndleap and Maggottail are close to fading, and Sparrowfeather is showing some signs of beginning to fade."

"How do we go into StarClan though?" Sharptalon asked, raising his head.

"Simple. One of you will go there. And that would be.... you, Sharptalon," Hawkheart meowed, lifting his tail.

Sharptalon bristled. "Why me?" He hissed.

"Just do it, mouse-dung!" Hawkheart growled. "We started to claw our barrier between the real world and ours. But the StarClan barrier is open. Sharptalon, go there and find a cat to lure here," Hawkheart ordered.

Sharptalon unsheathed his claws, his thoughts racing. "Alright," he sighed. He turned away from them, running towards the shadows of

the forest.

Sharptalon began to walk through the thick mist, feeling uncomfortable. The light from the glowing mushrooms faded and darkness surrounded Sharptalon. The rotting trees casted shadows along the path ahead.

Sharptalon quickened his walking, his tail flicking behind him. It felt like he was being watched by countless spirits. He was sure of it. He jumped as wind stirred his fur. A whisper in the breeze made his ears flatten.

Where even am I? Sharptalon quickened his walking once more. *Whatever, It doesn't matter. I'm still in the Dark Forest. Nothing new.* The stench of countless scents surrounded him and he felt like he was literally being watched now. He quickened his walking until he was practically running through the shaded mist.

"Save us, Sharptalon."

Sharptalon didn't stop as he heard a faint whisper in the breeze. The ground turned to mud beneath his paws, then turned to very shallow water. But the water felt very thick.

Sharptalon hissed in annoyance as he felt his paws sinking in the thick mud-water. The stench of dead cats was surrounding him like a mother curling around its kit. He continued to run through the thick mud-water, though.

"You're almost there."

Another whisper in the breeze was right in front of Sharptalon. The mist got thicker, almost like blood. Sharptalon squinted through the thick mist, almost thinking he saw a faint glowing light far away. He kept running, then suddenly slipped in the mud. Sharptalon tumbled, feeling the thick mud splash onto his clean brown fur.

Sharptalon shook the water and mud from his pelt and kept padding through the thick mist. But the further on, it felt like he couldn't breathe, almost like he was drowning in mist.

Sharptalon then felt something sharp, almost like claws, rake his

flank. He hissed in surprise. "Stop!" He hissed, almost feeling like a stupid kit for getting scared.

"This is amusing," a deep voice growled in front of Sharptalon's face.

"Who are you?" Sharptalon growled, lashing his tail. He unsheathed his claws, sinking them into the mud.

"One of the faded cats," the voice replied.

Sharptalon then felt a cold chill pass through his pelt. He shivered, feeling strange. He then felt as if claws had raked his shoulder. He lashed out at the air, but only tore through the thick mist and not the familiar fur and flesh. "What do you want?"

"I don't want anything. All that I ask is that you bring me and everyone else back," the voice meowed. It was hardly more than a whisper.

"Well I can't do that if you keep bothering me," Sharptalon growled in response, flattening his ears. He turned back forward, seeing the faint glowing light once more through the thick mist.

"You do realize that you..... probably won't be able to pass, right?" The voice talked once more.

"At least I'll be the first cat to try," Sharptalon sighed. He padded forward, trying to run, but it felt as if something was holding him back. He bristled in anger. "Quit trying to stop me!"

"Mouse-dung, that's not me, it's the barrier!" The voice replied, sounding annoyed.

Sharptalon flattened his ears, holding back a growl of annoyance. *I thought Hawkheart said the barrier was open!* He pushed against the invisible force with all his might, feeling the air get thicker around him.

Sharptalon then felt himself move forward, but he couldn't breathe. He tried desperately to draw in a breath, but the mist was so thick now that no air could be drawn into his lungs. He rushed forward, his heart pounded. *Am I going to die?* A second time, he tried to

breathe, but he failed.

Sharptalon clawed desperately at the invisible force in front of him. His lungs began to burn and he gasped for air. His heart was pounding in his ears, beating so loud he thought the ground was shaking. His lungs were screaming for air now and he felt trapped and closed in.

Sharptalon backed up, hoping he could breathe if he went back, but no air could be drawn in. He backed up even farther, desperately trying to breathe. His vision was beginning to flicker with blackness. *No, I never give up!* He ran forward with all his might, despite his muscles aching and his lungs screaming for air. He lunged forward, feeling himself pass through something. He felt a jolt go through his pelt, making his whole body shiver.

Sharptalon landed with a thump on his side, his vision dotting with blackness. He drew in a shuddering, gasping breath, struggling to regain his consciousness.

Sharptalon got to his paws and shook out his pelt. The faint glowing light was closer, the thick mist gone. He turned around, seeing extremely thick mist blotting out the darkness behind it. Perhaps the thick mist served as a barrier between StarClan and the Dark Forest.

Sharptalon raced forward. The night sky shone above his head, the stars twinkling. The almost-full-moon hung in the dark sky. Stars twinkled on the soft grass beneath Sharptalon's paws. *Now I just need to find some random StarClan cat to kill. But who*?

Sharptalon then noticed a small, fluffy white she-cat with brown splotches and pale green eyes. Her feathery tail lifted, bushing up in alarm as she saw Sharptalon. "Ashstar!" She called. "Intruder!"

Chapter 33

Sharptalon rushed forward, extending his claws. He pinned the she-cat to the ground, covering her mouth with his paw. An easy kill. "Shhh, it's ok!" He growled.

The white she-cat's eyes rounded with fear.

"I won't hurt you," Sharptalon lied. "I just need you to help me, please."

"W-why?" She asked, her small mew muffled. Stars made her white fur blaze brighter.

"One of my friends is trapped in the Dark Forest and doesn't know how to get out. I don't know how to get him out, and I was hoping you could help me," Sharptalon lied once more. He pulled back, uncovering her mouth.

The white she-cat got to his paws. "Then tell me your name," she meowed. "I was ordered to guard this barrier, and I think if anyone comes through, I should... ask for identification?" She murmured.

"I'm Sharpscar," Sharptalon lied, lifting his chin. "What's your name? You look young."

"Softpaw," the she-cat meowed.

"Please, will you help me?" Sharptalon meowed.

Softpaw looked thoughtful, her eyes rounding. "If my father is ok with it."

Sharptalon quickly thought of something to make her come with him. "No, I talked to him before. He said it's ok," he lied, forcing his fur to lie still.

"He did?" Softpaw questioned. "He never mentioned a 'Sharpscar' awkwardly coming through the barrier and asking me a question.

But I believe you. Ashstar sometimes forgets things," Softpaw mewed, flicking her tail.

"Come this way," Sharptalon mewed, flicking his tail. He padded forward, now at the thick-misted barrier. "Is there an easier way to get through this?" He asked.

"Yes, it's easy. You just walk right through. On StarClan's side, you can pass right through the barrier and the mist doesn't affect you this way. But on the Dark Forest's side, it's hard to pass through," Softpaw explained. "But I guess you know how hard it is anyways, considering you came through there."

"Yeah, it was hard, but it worked," Sharptalon meowed.

They passed through the barrier with no trouble at all, and began to walk through the mist.

Sharptalon felt like he was being watched again. Several cold chills passed through his pelt, and scents surrounded him. The thick, watery-mud smucked beneath his paws. Finally, after what seemed like forever, they were out of the mud and now walking on the rough soil.

"Jeez, how far is your friend?" Softpaw asked.

"A little bit farther," Sharptalon meowed. Do I have to take her all the way back alive? Sharptalon began to slow his pace, letting Softpaw lead.

"What?" Softpaw prompted.

"Sorry, I'm just tired, that's all," Sharptalon lied. The mist surrounded him felt like countless pelts he was rubbing up against. A chilly breeze stirred his fur.

"Do it, now."

Sharptalon's ears pricked forward as he heard a different voice, a lot more different than the voice he heard from before.

Sharptalon then lunged forward, digging his claws into the white

she-cat's pelt.

"Hey, stop!" Softpaw gasped.

Sharptalon clamped his jaws around her neck, sinking his claws into her shoulders and head. He pressed her chin to the ground. She kicked and squirmed under his strong grip, but her struggles got weaker and weaker. Suddenly, Softpaw kicked out, striking Sharptalon's stomach. He was knocked back.

Softpaw rammed her head into his chest, knocking the breath from him. Blood trickled down her face from the wound on top of her head, staining her fur. She pinned Sharptalon now.

"Foolish apprentice!" Sharptalon yowled, lashing his paw forward. His long, sharp claws struck her throat, clawing out tufts of fur and carving a gash.

Softpaw's screech was cut off and was muffled by blood bubbling in her mouth. Her eyes widened and she looked at her wound. She glanced back up at Sharptalon, her eyes blazing with sadness. "I-I...only wanted to see my brother," she murmured, her eyes dulling.

Softpaw collapsed, her body limp. Her dull eyes stared blankly up at the dark sky. Then her spirit faded away, leaving nothing but blood on the ground.

Sharptalon shook the dirt from his pelt, then felt the ground shake under him. He bristled, looking around him. Suddenly, the mist swirled around him.

A dark shadow appeared in front of Sharptalon, then began to brighten in front of him.

The shadow brightened into the figure of a large dark brown tabby tom with a scarred pelt. His ear had a v-shaped down the tip and his amber eyes shone.

Another shadow appeared beside him, brightening into the figure of spiky-furred tom with dark gray fur and patches of white of his face and shoulders and with amber eyes.

"You've done well," the brown tabby murmured. "You may have heard of me. I am Tigerstar."

The gray tom dipped his head. "And you've probably heard of me too. I am Thistleclaw."

"Who was the voice talking to me?" Sharptalon asked. None of their voices matched what Sharptalon had heard in mist.

"Behind you," the familiar voice replied.

Sharptalon turned around, locking eyes with a broad-shouldered brown tabby tom with clear green eyes. He had white slash-markings over his front legs. "I am Slash," he meowed. "I was the voice you heard while in the mist."

Another figure appeared beside Slash. This tom was large and pale gray with icy-blue eyes. One of his ears was torn. "I am an ancient leader. My name is...."

Chapter 34

"I am Skystar, an ancient leader of SkyClan," the tom meowed.

"Are there any others?" Sharptalon asked.

Two more shadows appeared. One was a scrawny, mottled pale ginger tom with only one yellow eye, and the other was a yellow she-cat with black stripes and amber eyes.

Two other shadows appeared. One was a black and brown tom, and the other was a small, broad-shouldered brown tabby tom with yellow eyes.

The one-eyed tom lifted his chin. "I'm One Eye, and this is Bee," he introduced himself, then flicked his tail to the black-striped she-cat.

The brown and black tom flicked his tail. "I'm Beetle."

The small, broad-shouldered brown tabby tom with yellow eyes unsheathed his claws. "And I'm Snake."

Sharptalon gazed around. "You all need to come back to the others," he meowed.

"And I will become leader again," Skystar growled.

Tigerstar flattened his ears. "I thought I would become leader," he mewed.

"Well I guess you won't," Skystar hissed. "I was the first leader to die, and I will be the leader of the Dark Forest."

"It doesn't even matter, lets go back," Sharptalon growled.

"It does matter who's leader, mouse-brain. We need a cat to keep the rules in check," Snake hissed, bristling.

Sharptalon loomed over the smaller tom, unsheathing his claws. "The Dark Forest has its own rules!" He hissed. Furious, he lashed out with a paw, his claws slicing Snake's muzzle. Blood spattered onto the ground.

"Quit it!" Slash growled, lashing his tail.

Amusement shown in One Eye's eye, and Tigerstar looked annoyed.

"Lets go," Sharptalon sighed.

"You brought them back?" Hawkheart gasped. "I didn't think you'd be up to killing a StarClan apprentice," he mocked.

Sharptalon bristled. "You better not doubt me from now on. At least I went through the barrier, unlike a cowardly cat like you," he hissed.

"Me? Cowardly?" Hawkheart growled.

"That's enough. Quit arguing like kits," Brokenstar hissed.

Skystar padded forward, his tail flicking. "Step down from your leadership, Brokenstar," he hissed. "I'm supposed to be leader."

"Really?" Brokenstar growled.

Suddenly, Sharptalon felt his vision begin to get dark. He was waking up. He faded from the Dark Forest and jumped awake in his nest, alerted by a cat calling his name.

"Sharptalon! Wake up, it's time to go!"

Sharptalon blinked open his eyes, seeing Needlepaw looming over the edge of his nest.

"A ThunderClan patrol came. Squirrelstar came here with Flamedawn, Lighttail, and Firestorm," Needlepaw mewed, her eyes shimmering. "We can finally go home and be under the shade of the trees!"

Sharptalon stumbled to his paws, shaking his head to clear the sleep

from his eyes.

Needlepaw moved aside as she watched the brown tom climb from his nest. "I saw you in the dream. What happened?"

"I.. went into StarClan through the barrier and ended up bringing back the faded ones," Sharptalon sighed.

"So.... now there's a lot of cats in the Dark Forest?" Needlepaw asked.

Sharptalon crept through the den entrance. "Yes, everyone's back."

"Sharptalon!"

Sharptalon spotted Lighttail rushing towards him. His brother slammed into him, almost knocking him off his paws. "You're ok! I've missed you so much!"

Sharptalon felt his brother's tongue licking his shoulder fur. He rested his chin on the pale tom's head. "It's good to see you too."

Lighttail pulled away. "Since you've been gone, nothing much has happened. Except that we caught fox and rogue scent inside our borders."

"I'm ready for it. How's Stormgaze?" Sharptalon asked, stretching.

"She's fine. And so is Wingkit," Lighttail purred.

Past Lighttail, Sharptalon spotted Rabbittail sitting at the den entrance. He was glaring at Sharptalon, his tail flicking.

"Where's Echostrike?" Sharptalon asked.

"She woke up earlier than you and is talking with Squirrelstar," Lighttail meowed.

"Alright, then lets go," Sharptalon mewed, padding past his brother. He ducked through the camp entrance, seeing Squirrelstar talking with Gorsestar and his deputy, Doveclaw. Firestorm, Flamedawn, and Echostrike were with her.

Echostrike turned her head, her eyes glistening as she spotted Sharptalon. She raced forward towards him. "Sharptalon," she breathed. "I woke up and saw you shaking in your nest like you were having a.... nightmare," she mewed. "Are you ok?"

Sharptalon quickly nodded. "I'm fine, thanks."

Flamedawn was looking troubled as he talked with Gorsestar.

Sharptalon pricked his ears to hear the medicine cat.

"I need to speak with Rabbittail," he mewed. "I think something has happened."

Gorsestar blinked at him. "Ok. Doveclaw, get Rabbittail for me."

Doveclaw hurried away.

Sharptalon padded forward. "What's wrong?" He asked.

"Nothing," Flamedawn quickly answered, his eyes wild with panic.

"Sharptalon." Squirrelstar dipped her head. "You're here. Are you feeling better?"

"Better than I was," Sharptalon sighed.

Doveclaw returned, Rabbittail at her side.

"Rabbittail! I think we should speak with the other medicine cats about this," Flamedawn meowed. "Squirrelstar. We need to get back to camp immediately to fetch Mothstripe and Twistedfoot. Then we need to get to ShadowClan's and RiverClan's camp," Flamedawn mewed. "This is urgent."

Squirrelstar blinked at him. "And your reason is?" She prompted.

"Something has happened in StarClan, I-I... can't explain," Flamedawn mewed. "We must hurry."

"Is Rabbittail coming with you?" Gorsestar asked.

"I assume he is. Flamedawn says it's urgent," Squirrelstar sighed.

"We'll send him back once this is over. Take care!" She called.

Sharptalon hurried toward the patrol. Needlepaw looked worried. "Is Flamedawn ok?"

"Yeah, I guess," Sharptalon mewed. He remembered suddenly that Flamedawn was her father's brother. Of course she'd care about him.

Needlepaw hurried off to walk with another cat.

Sharptalon was walking with Lighttail and Echostrike now. Something told him that he knew what Flamedawn was talking about. His fur stood on end.

"Something wrong, Sharptalon?" Lighttail asked.

"No. I guess I'm just worried," Sharptalon meowed, looking at his paws.

Lighttail avoided his gaze. They continued to walk in silence for the rest of the way.

Chapter 35

"I'm glad you're back," Stormgaze murmured, her purr rumbling in her throat.

"I'm glad to see you," Sharptalon purred, licking her in between her ears.

Dustkit, Wingkit, and Lilykit played together, their excited mews echoing in the den.

"Why don't you visit the elders? Maybe they'll have a story to tell," Phoenixwing mewed, her eyes shimmering.

"But the elders are sometimes boring," Graykit mumbled. His gray-silver eyes were a unique feature.

"They aren't boring," Phoenixwing mewed.

"Sometimes they tell the same stories," Graykit argued.

"Has Flower told you her story of how she became blind?" Sharptalon asked, sitting down beside Stormgaze.

"No," Graykit mewed. "But I don't care. All I want to do is stay in the den with Grasskit."

Grasskit was the smallest of her siblings. She always wanted to sleep and acted like she couldn't walk. She always seemed so weak.

"Grasskit will get better. Don't worry," Phoenixwing soothed. Grief clouded her eyes. "Poor Echostrike," she murmured.

A moon and a half had passed since Sharptalon had gotten back. Leafpool had moved from the den when her kits became apprentices, which was three days ago. Peachpaw was Flamedawn's apprentice and Auburnpaw's mentor was Firestorm.

"Wingkit's apprenticeship ceremony is today," Stormgaze purred. "Stalkfire would be an amazing mentor for her," she suggested.

"He hasn't even had an apprentice yet anyways," Sharptalon meowed, curling his tail around his paws.

"Then maybe Squirrelstar will let him train Wingkit, you think?" Stormgaze asked, her beautiful green eyes shimmering.

"We'll have to see," Sharptalon murmured.

Lighttail suddenly padded into the den. "Wingkit," he called softly. "Squirrelstar would like to see you."

"All cats old enough to hunt, join beneath the High-Ledge for a Clan meeting!" Squirrelstar's voice rang outside.

Wingkit jumped in excitement. "My apprentice ceremony!" She squeaked, scampering from the den.

Sharptalon got to his paws. "I've gotta see her ceremony," he purred to Stormgaze.

Stormgaze purred. "I'm coming too." She grunted as she tried to get to her paws.

"Let me help," Sharptalon murmured. He let her lean on his shoulder as she stood up. Her flanks were very swollen now. Her kits would be due soon.

Stormgaze slightly stumbled to the entrance of the den.

Sharptalon padded out from the den, blinking in the bright sunshine. He took a seat beside his brother, Stormgaze sitting on his other side.

"Wingkit has reached the age of six moons and is now ready to be an apprentice," Squirrelstar meowed. "Wingkit, step forward, please."

Wingkit stumbled forward, her eyes round with fright and loneliness as she stared around at the crowd.

Squirrelstar's gaze flashed with sympathy. "Wingkit, you have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Wingpaw. Your mentor will be Ivypool. I hope Ivypool will pass down all she knows on to you."

Wingpaw looked up at Ivypool, who was beside Squirrelstar, looking a bit surprised. She jumped down.

"Ivypool, you are ready to take on an apprentice. You have received excellent training from Ferncloud and have shown yourself to be loyal and courageous. You will be the mentor of Wingpaw, and I expect you to pass on all you know to Wingpaw," Squirrelstar called, lifting her tail.

Wingpaw stretched forward to touch noses with Ivypool.

"Wingpaw! Wingpaw!" The Clan cheered.

Sharptalon felt a sense of pride. He wondered how he would feel once his kits went up there.

Lighttail scampered forward, his eyes shining. "Congratulations, Wingpaw!" He purred, licking his daughter's cheek.

Sharptalon looked at Stormgaze. "I'm gonna welcome Wingpaw's new name," he meowed to his mate. "Do you want to come?"

"Of course," Stormgaze purred, grunting as she got to her paws. Her swollen flanks swung from side to side.

"Are you ok?" Sharptalon asked.

"Yes, just tired. I guess I'm not used to being out of my nest this long," Stormgaze sighed. She leaned against Sharptalon's shoulder as they walked towards Wingpaw and Ivypool.

"Congrats, Wingpaw," Sharptalon purred.

Wingpaw turned towards him, her eyes brightening. "I can't wait to start training!" She squeaked.

"Well you'll be cleaning out the Elders' den first," Ivypool meowed.

Wingpaw flattened her ears in disbelief. She brightened as she saw Beechpaw and Rookpaw slide from the Apprentices' den. Jaywing and Moonshine, their mentors, were waiting by the camp entrance for them.

"But Beechpaw and Rookpaw don't have to," Wingpaw complained.

"That's because they're about to have their warrior assessments," Ivypool explained.

Blazepaw scampered forward. "I'll help you clean out the Elders' den, Wingpaw!" He called, lifting his tail.

Wingpaw scampered forward with shimmering amber eyes. "Thank you!"

Sharptalon turned back to Lighttail, Stormgaze, and Ivypool.

"Monarchwing would be so proud," Stormgaze murmured, her eyes glistening.

Ivypool smiled at her. "She would indeed. Now I should be ordering patrols."

Sharptalon stared after her as she went to the Warriors' den and later returned with Berrynose, Blossomfall, Sootpaw, and Mistfang.

"I want you four to patrol our border with the rogues. Report back to me if you find anything," Ivypool meowed, flicking her tail. "Berrynose, you'll be the leader of the patrol."

"Let's go back to the nursery," Stormgaze puffed, beginning to pad over to the den.

Lighttail shifted his paws.

"Is something wrong?" Sharptalon asked his brother.

"I'm worried about Flamedawn, and why he seemed to be in such a hurry to speak with the other medicine cats," Lighttail admitted.

"He said something about StarClan...."

"Don't worry about it, it's probably nothing," Sharptalon soothed. He turned away and padded towards the fresh-kill pile, pawing through the prey until he found a plump mouse. He picked it up in his jaws. He turned back around, passing the Medicine cat's den.

"-came to me in a dream? He said Softpaw had disappeared."

Sharptalon said topped as he recognized Flamedawn's voice. His heart skipped a beat, realizing what the orange tabby was talking about. He padded closer to the den. Squinting his eyes to peek through.

Flamedawn was speaking with Mothstripe and Twistedfoot, his gaze frantic.

"It was probably just a dream," Mothstripe soothed. "Like we said."

"But I had another vision! Ashstar came to me again! He said he found brown fur by the barrier!" Flamedawn meowed. "Think about this! A Dark Forest cat came through the barrier! The Dark Forest is getting stronger!"

"Nonsense. Firestar had made sure the barrier couldn't be breakable," Twistedfoot chipped in.

"Well he sure did do a terrible job," Flamedawn growled.

"What are you talking about?" Peachpaw asked, her eyes rounding. "Slow down please."

"It doesn't matter anymore, Peachpaw. Come on, lets collect herbs," Flamedawn meowed

"We have plenty," Mothstripe pointed out.

"Come on, Flamedawn, you said you'd teach me about marigold and horsetail today!" Peachpaw squeaked.

Sharptalon backed away, trotting over to the nursery. *What will they do if they find out that* I *killed Softpaw?*

Chapter 36

"Sharptalon, I want you to be on a patrol with Bramblehawk and Beechfall," Ivypool meowed. "Leaf-Fall is approaching, and we need all the prey we can catch."

Sharptalon held back a sigh, heading out of camp with Bramblehawk and Beechfall, the Clan's youngest warrior. A half-moon had passed since the tom's warrior ceremony.

Sharptalon looked up as a dry leaf drifted onto his pelt. He shook it off, glancing up at the sky. A chilly breeze ruffled his fur. The sky, mostly blotted out by the crinkled amber-colored leaves, was a pale gray color, dark clouds running across it like kits chasing each other.

"Thrush," Bramblehawk whispered, stalking through the undergrowth.

Sharptalon could smell mouse as he opened his jaws to taste the breeze.

Beechfall was gone, probably hunting something else.

Sharptalon stalked through the undergrowth, creeping past a tall tree. He saw the mouse at the base of a birch tree, nibbling on some seeds. He crept forward towards the mouse.

The mouse hadn't sensed him yet and continued to eat a seed, then scampered left, sniffing at a walnut on the ground.

Sharptalon then lunged forward, his paws trapping the mouse beneath them. He quickly killed it with a bite to the neck. He buried his prey under some leaves and stood still, parting his jaws open to taste the air for other prey scents.

Sharptalon then bristled, pricking his ears as he heard the rustling of leaves above his head.

Sharptalon leaped away as Beechfall suddenly jumped from the branch, a fat squirrel in his jaws.

"Beechfall!" Sharptalon hissed, slightly irritated.

"Huh, what?" Beechfall purred. "I thought I'd scare you."

"We aren't kits, we're warriors, and we're supposed to be feeding the Clan," Sharptalon sniffed. "I wouldn't mind you going back to the nursery," he mewed, padding past him.

Beechfall lifted his head from the dirt where he'd buried his squirrel. "Ok, Sharp*star*." Beechfall flicked his tail, his whiskers twitching.

Sharptalon crept through the undergrowth as he heard rustling. He parted his jaws and tasted vole.

Beechfall appeared beside him. "I'm just trying to lighten the mood," he sighed.

Sharptalon saw the vole scampering toward a small hole in the ground. He leaped forward, slamming down his paws, but missing the small creature. He hissed in annoyance as the vole slipped inside the hole, disappearing.

Beechfall scampered up to him, whiskers twitching in amusement. "One miss, one belly empty tonight."

Sharptalon snapped around, flattening his ears and wrinkling his muzzle. "And that's your fault! You scared it away!" He snapped.

"Welp, sorry," Beechfall murmured. "I guess you're a warrior that doesn't like to be fooled with."

"Beechfall, that's enough!" Bramblehawk leaped through the undergrowth, lashing his tail. He padded forward, glancing at Sharptalon. "I've caught fox scent close to ShadowClan's border."

"Well, then it can be ShadowClan's problem," Beechfall growled, flattening his ears.

"And it's also ours," Bramblehawk pointed out, flashing the tom an irritated look. "Sharptalon, come here."

Sharptalon followed his Clanmate through the undergrowth until they reached a cedar tree with a hole in the at the top where the branches began. A woodpecker flew from it.

Sharptalon parted his jaws to taste for a scent. Fox. Bramblehawk was right.

"I just hope it hasn't got a den around here. This scent is fresh," Bramblehawk meowed, flicking his tail.

"Well, we might as well hope it doesn't *come back,*" Sharptalon sniffed, flicking his tail.

"We should go back and report this to Ivypool," Bramblehawk insisted. "Collect the prey you caught."

Sharptalon dropped a plump vole at Stormgaze's paws. He lay down beside her, eating a mouse for himself. The sun was setting outside.

"So you caught fresh fox scent right by ShadowClan's border?" Stormgaze prompted.

"Yes. We thought it had dug out a den there," Sharptalon told her.

Stormgaze buried her muzzle in her shoulder fur, purring.

Sharptalon purred too, resting his tail on her tail.

Stormgaze then pulled back and leaned down to eat her vole.

Peachpaw padded into the den. "Is everything ok?" She asked.

"Everything is fine," Sharptalon replied, shifting his paws.

Phoenixwing stood up. "Young Peachpaw, could you please check on Grasskit? She hasn't gotten any better, I don't think." Concern

edged the she-cat's voice.

Peachpaw padded forward towards Phoenixwing's nest. She crouched down, examining Grasskit, the smallest of her siblings, who was curled up beside Lilykit. She blinked, taking an interest in the small kit's eyes.

Graykit and Dustkit exchanged concerned looks, their pelts spiking. "Grasskit is ok, right?" They asked.

Peachpaw didn't respond at first, putting her paw on Grasskit's forehead. She pressed her pad against it. "She's running a fever. Let me go get Flamedawn."

As Peachpaw rushed from the den, Phoenixwing whimpered.

"She's-she's going to die," Phoenixwing cried, her eyes rounding with grief. She pushed her nose in her daughter's pelt.

Sharptalon flashed her a sympathetic look. "No, she won't. I think she'll live," he soothed.

Phoenixwing didn't respond, only continued to whimper.

Flamedawn came into the den, herbs in his jaws. "Peachpaw." his mew was muffled, "Get Grasskit. She needs to be in the medicine den for this."

Peachpaw stepped over Graykit and Dustkit. "Phoenixwing. I'll need to take Grasskit to the medicine den," she whispered.

Sharptalon wondered if the she-kit would die. She hadn't gotten any better last moon. *And only more pain for Phoenixwing to endure.*

Peachpaw gently lifted Grasskit by the scruff, taking her from the nest. She turned away, padding from the den.

Phoenixwing got to her paws. "Hawkfoot needs to know about this," she mewed, padding from the den.

Sharptalon watched after her, then licked Stormgaze's cheek. "I'm gonna get some sleep, dear. Bye," he purred.

"Sweet dreams," Stormgaze purred, nuzzling her mate's cheek.

Sharptalon padded from the den, feeling tired now. He'd hunted this morning, the after reporting the fox-scent, he'd hunted more and then patrolled borders, catching more rogue scent.

Sharptalon brushed through the entrance to the Warriors' den, padding to the back where his nest was. He climbed into his nest and curled up for sleep, darkness folding around his vision.

Chapter 37

Sharptalon woke up to a quiet talking. The voices sounded low. Another long day had passed after catching those scents. Maybe other cats in the Clan were worried.

Sharptalon got to his paws and stretched, his jaws gaping wide in a yawn. He stepped over his sleeping Clanmates, hearing birds chirping outside. The sun shone dimly outside, hiding behind a gray cloud.

"Sharptalon! You're up!" Stormgaze was laying on a smoothed patch of grass, her storm-gray pelt dappled with sunlight. "Come over here!"

Sharptalon eagerly padded towards his mate, his thoughts mixed. "Yes, love?" He mewed.

Stormgaze's swollen flanks stuck out and swayed as she heaved herself to her paws with a grunt. "I'm soaking up the last bits of sunshine before leaf-bare actually comes," Stormgaze meowed.

"Oh Stormgaze, you know it'll be a few more moons before leaf-bare is here," Sharptalon soothed, sitting down beside her. He could feel a slight warmth on his pelt as the cloud finally passed over the sun.

Wingpaw and Blazepaw were walking together, talking eagerly. They padded towards the fresh-kill pile, grabbing mice.

Stormgaze purred. "Looks like Wingpaw's already got a crush on someone," she teased.

Sharptalon stared after them, remembering when he was an apprentice with Stormgaze. Those were the great days. He remembered Fluffypelt always being there for him, and Ambertuft training him. *Why did I have to lose everyone I loved?* He then shook

his head. *No, I've still got Stormgaze and my unborn kits, and my brother.*

Stormgaze lay down, pressing her muzzle to Sharptalon's cheek, purring.

Sharptalon rested his tail over her tail, his purr faded.

"Is something wrong?" Stormgaze asked, pulling away. Her eyes were rounded with concern.

"Nothing. I was just thinking about my mother. I miss her deeply," Sharptalon sighed, closing his eyes. Wind stirred his fur.

"I know you do. She was a very nice cat," Stormgaze murmured. "But remember that she gave her life for yours. She loved you."

"If only my father and sister were the same," Sharptalon sighed. He could feel his claws sinking into the grass. "They abused me during kithood and even when I'd became an apprentice. Then they left me, joining the rogues."

"Sometimes life is hard," Stormgaze murmured. "But we have to keep going for our ancestors' sake."

Sharptalon then thought back on when he was in the Dark Forest. He remembered how Silk had talked about how the Clans wouldn't allow you to live your own way. And I do agree, the warrior code is a bit unfair.

Stormgaze looked at Sharptalon. "Your brother is calling you, you know."

Sharptalon snapped out of his thoughts. "Oh, sorry," he mewed as his brother came up to him. "I was wrapped up in my thoughts."

"That's ok," Lighttail meowed, flashing him a sympathetic look. "I wanted to go take a walk."

"Take a walk?" Sharptalon echoed, getting to his paws.

"We're brothers. I want to bond more," Lighttail admitted, his gaze

shimmering with grief. "I feel like we should maybe... talk to eachother to calm ourselves. You know, like...."

Sharptalon gazed at him sympathetically. "Good idea. We can share our thoughts," he meowed. My brother has always been a bit soft.

"Yeah, that's what I meant. So, do you want to do it now?" Lighttail asked, his whiskers twitching.

"Sure. Let's go," Sharptalon purred, flicking his tail. He watched as his brother's eyes brightened, then turned to Stormgaze. "Do you mind if I go?" He asked.

"I don't mind at all. You two are kin," Stormgaze mewed softly. She lay back down on her side, her legs sprawled out.

Sharptalon padded with his brother to the camp entrance, his thoughts running all over his head. *What would happen if I tell Lighttail I'm training in the Dark Forest?* He felt guilty lying to his brother. *No, don't feel guilty. He might would lie about some things too, right?*

As soon as they'd left the camp entrance, Lighttail began to quicken his pace. "Sharptalon," he murmured.

Sharptalon quickened his pace. "Yes?" He prompted.

"I-I have feelings for Nightsky," Lighttail murmured, his voice shaky. Before Sharptalon could respond, Lighttail went on. "Hey, I know she's RiverClan, I know, but I can't help but like her."

Sharptalon bristled. "Lighttail!" He hissed. "That's breaking the warrior code! You know what happens when these feelings build into a relationship, right?" He growled.

Lighttail bristled, lashing his tail. "I know that!" He spat. "I just want some cat to love in my life! Give me a chance, please, Sharptalon! My mate died having my kits, and I want a new mate, some cat that loves me, I want to have more kits," Lighttail mewed, guilt in his mew.

"And? You think that just because your mate died, that's ok?"

Sharptalon snapped. "And what would happen if this *new mate* died, huh? Would you fall in love with another Clan cat?"

Lighttail's eyes rounded. "I know it's against the code, but I don't care, I should be able to live my own life!" He growled, turning on his brother.

Sharptalon then remembered how Silk had mentioned how the warrior code trapped them. *What am I doing? Silk was right, the warrior code is trapping us.* He blinked at his brother. "You know what? You're right. The warrior code is trapping us. You should be able to have any mate you want," he mewed. "And I'm not saying this to be nice, I'm saying this because this is how I feel."

Lighttail blinked at him. "What? You don't believe in the warrior code...?"

"Basically," Sharptalon sighed. "Sorry I screamed at you." He gazed at his brother. "I just figured it was maybe the right reaction."

Lighttail looked guilty. "I saw her in the gathering place with her sister. They were hunting for herbs or something. And I was hunting for prey. But I heard them through the reeds and I decided to see what they were doing. But, looks like I fell in love with Nightsky."

Sharptalon blinked at him. *The warrior code traps us all...* The phrase kept repeating in his head.

"We've been meeting up in the gathering place. But please don't tell anyone," Lighttail mewed, his eyes shimmering with slight fear.

"I won't tell anyone." Sharptalon then had an idea. "Well, I have to tell you something too," he mewed, flicking his tail.

"What is it?" Lighttail asked. "That you don't believe in the warrior code?" He asked jokingly.

"I'm training with the Dark Forest," Sharptalon explained, avoiding his brother's gaze.

"What?" Lighttail gasped. His eyes narrowed with suspicion. "You *do* realize that they murdered an innocent StarClan apprentice, right?"

He hissed.

"Yes," Sharptalon meowed. He couldn't help but admit to his brother. "*I* killed her."

Lighttail's eyes widened. "You? *You?* Why, Sharptalon?" He cried. "Killing is against the warrior code, and it's especially bad if it's a young StarClan cat!"

Sharptalon bristled. "The Dark Forest is good. They give me more attention than my sister or father ever did!" He hissed, lashing his tail. He felt his claws sink into the dirt and imagined sinking them into Snowbreeze's throat.

"That doesn't matter. I have to tell Flamedawn this!" Lighttail mewed.

Sharptalon's heart pounded. *No! What's wrong with him?* "What's wrong with you?"he spat. "Do you want me exiled?" He asked.

"I-if you're a threat!" Lighttail mewed. He shoved past Sharptalon, lashing his tail. "I have to tell everyone. This is a serious matter," he mewed, no guilt in his mew.

Sharptalon felt anger surge through him. "Then I guess it means I'll tell everyone about your new little *crush*!"

"It wouldn't matter. They wouldn't listen to a *murderer's* word," Lighttail growled.

Sharptalon's heart pounded in his throat. A strange fire burned in his claws. "I knew I shouldn't of trusted you!" He hissed, leaping on his brother. He couldn't control it. He dug his claws into his brother's shoulders and clamped his jaws around his neck, sinking in his teeth hard.

Chapter 38

Lighttail jerked underneath his brother, his mew of terror cutting off as a gurgling sound replaced it.

Sharptalon backed away, the iron-tang of blood in his mouth. He stared down at his brother's body, blinking. I shouldn't feel guilty.

Lighttail was on the ground, twitching, his neck fur torn, blood spilling from the wound. He was breathing still, his eyes staring pleadingly into Sharptalon's eyes. "Brother.... p-please," he rasped, blood trickling down his chin. He coughed and spat blood onto the ground.

Sharptalon backed away. "Don't plead me, *brother*," he hissed cruelly. "You *betrayed* me. Now you get to suffer. A-a brother like you.... I thought you'd always stay loyal to me, agree with me, help me with my depression and anxiety.... but look where you are now."

Lighttail's reflection shone in the pool of blood that he lay in. His eyes reflected Sharptalon and his emotionless face. Then he twitched violently, his legs jerking wildly. Finally, he fell still, his eyes dull and staring blankly into the sky.

Sharptalon felt the anger melt from him. Grief overcame him. "No, no, what have I done?" He murmured. His tail drooped, his claws sheathing. He looked around, hoping no cat had heard them. He dropped to the ground, his heart pounding. Blood stained his mouth. What did I do?

Sharptalon darted forward, grabbing his dead brother's scruff. The tom was already stiff with cold. He picked him up, grunting as he felt his weight. *I'll put him by the rogue's border*.

Sharptalon dragged him through the undergrowth, his paws heavy. *Lighttail is dead. Now what?*

Sharptalon had left Lighttail's body by the rogue's border, and was now at the stream. He'd washed off his bloody paws and mouth, and was now looking at his reflection. *How do I make it seem like we were attacked? Maybe a..*

Suddenly, a growl erupted behind Sharptalon. *A fox!*

A fox jumped from the undergrowth, already snapping at Sharptalon's shoulder. He stood still, allowing it to bite him. Pain sliced through his shoulder but he ignored it. He swiped at the fox's snout, his claws slicing through flesh. Blood spattered on the ground. *Run!*

Sharptalon darted away from the fox, heading towards camp. He could feel his wound stinging with pain and could feel blood trickling through his fur. Then he stopped in his tracks as a patrol come from the bushes: Foxleap, Birchfall, Whitewing, Blossomfall, and Sootpaw.

Foxleap immediately leaped forward, landing on the fox's head, his claws digging into its muzzle.

Birchfall leaped forward with Whitewing. The two warriors leaped onto the fox's back, their claws digging into its fur.

Sharptalon glanced at Blossomfall and Sootpaw. "Ask later!" He gasped, turning around to face the fox. Snarling, he darted underneath its belly and slashed.

The fox yelped with pain and shook off Birchfall and Whitewing, then backed up, snarling. Anger showed in its eyes, but it understood it couldn't beat this fight. Blood trickled from scratches on its face. Blood dripped from its belly. With a yelp of annoyance, the fox turned and ran off.

Sharptalon turned to his Clanmates, panting. Foxleap had long claw marks along his flanks that bled heavily, staining his fur and dripping onto the ground.

Birchfall glared at Sharptalon. "What were you thinking, running blindly through the undergrowth with a fox behind you?" He asked.

Sharptalon blinked at Birchfall painfully, surprised at his hostile tone. "Well what would you do?" He growled defensively. "I was trying to make it back to you," he rapsed, his shoulder wound stinging.

"And why?" Whitewing asked, her ears pricked forward. "Why were you out here by yourself anyway?" She asked, her eyes narrowing.

"Me and Lighttail," Sharptalon began. "He wanted me to take a walk with him to talk about stuff, and a fox just came out of nowhere and attacked us!" Sharptalon meowed, lashing his tail. *They can't find out I'm lying.*

Birchfall blinked at him, looking around him. "Well... where's Lighttail?" He asked.

"The fox k-killed him," Sharptalon lied, his voice cracking. "I-it all happened so fast," he murmured, his head drooping. He dug his claws into the ground. "My poor brother, killed by a stupid fox!" He hissed.

Blossomfall glanced at him with sympathy. "N-no, not Lighttail!" She gasped with shock. "Lighttail was an amazing warrior. How could he of died?" She murmured.

"That stupid fox! We need to take revenge!" Sootpaw growled, bristling.

"I-I'm sorry about that, Sharptalon," Birchfall murmured, his gaze shimmering with grief.

"Poor Lighttail," Whitewing murmured, shifting her paws.

"Where is his body now?" Foxleap asking, panting.

"At the rogue's border," Sharptalon mewed.

"Why at the rogue's border?" Birchfall asked.

"We went over there to check if maybe any rogus had crossed over," Sharptalon lied. "And then that's when..." he trailed off, remembering the horrified and surprised look on his brother's face as he died.

"That's why you don't go out with only one cat. Squirrelstar warned us all that fox scent was caught inside the territory," Birchfall pointed out, his whiskers twitching.

"Hey, Birchfall! Let's get back to camp before Foxleap bleeds to death!" Blossomfall hissed, her tail lashing.

Chapter 39

Three days had passed since the fox attack. Wingpaw was devastated over Lighttail's death. Sharptalon felt bad for her. *And now it's my turn to raise her.*

Sharptalon stalked through the undergrowth, feeling the cold breeze of the leaf-fall winds. He shook out his pelt. The mouse he was hunting was scuttling around the roots of a tree, searching for something to eat.

Then, Sharptalon leaped forward, his claws extended. He landed on the mouse, killing it with a quick bite to the neck. He picked it up in his jaws. *I should return back to camp with this.* He padded through the undergrowth until he reached a birch tree and dug up the vole he caught. He padded over to where a badger's old den was and dug up a fat squirrel. *I hope the elders enjoy this.*

As Sharptalon walked into camp, he padded to the fresh-kill pile. It was not that big, with only a skinny shrew, a fat thrush, a squirrel, two rabbits, and five mice in the pile. He placed his catch in the pile, then turned as he heard a noise at the camp entrance.

Wingpaw padded into camp, Ivypool at her side, looking proud. Molefur and Blazepaw were with them.

Wingpaw and Blazepaw were walking together, looking happy. Wingpaw had a wren in her mouth, and Blazepaw had a young squirrel.

Wingpaw glanced up as she neared Sharptalon. "Sharptalon! Look! I caught my first bird!" She purred.

"Great job," Sharptalon purred. "And good job too, Blazepaw."

Blazepaw nuzzled his friend's cheek, purring.

Ivypool padded up with Molefur at her side. "I've got to go organize

patrols," she meowed before turning away.

Molefur shifted his paws. "Go ahead and clean out the elders' den," he meowed to Blazepaw.

"Can Wingpaw help?" Blazepaw asked, blinking at his mentor.

"No, I was planning to take her out to practice a battle move," Molefur meowed, twitching his whiskers.

"Aw, well, bye, I guess," Blazepaw meowed to Wingpaw, flicking his tail.

"Sootpaw and Auburnpaw should be there too," Molefur called after Blazepaw as he padded away.

Sharptalon watched as Wingpaw and Molefur padded out of camp, then turned back to the fresh-kill pile. He picked out a two mice from the pile, then headed to the nursery, eager to see his mate.

Sharptalon began to make his way across camp, but as he crossed the medicine den, he heard a cat calling him. He turned, seeing Peachpaw. She motioned him towards her.

"What?" Sharptalon asked through a mouth full of fur.

"I need to speak to you," Peachpaw whispered. She looked scared.

Sharptalon padded closer and pushed through the overhanging brambles, then placed his mouse at his paws. "What about?" He asked as he sat down.

"It's about Rabbittail," Peachpaw mumbled.

Sharptalon felt interested now. "But why speak to me about it?" He asked.

"Well I trust you. And plus you were in WindClan's camp for a few days," Peachpaw pointed out, her tail curling around her paws. "Did he do anything weird while you were there?" She asked.

"No, not really,"Sharptalon mewed, twitching his whiskers. *Should I*

tell her about Kestrelflight? "He seemed a bit strange though."

Peachpaw narrowed her eyes. "Are you hiding something from me?" She asked.

"No. I just don't know if I should tell you," Sharptalon explained, flicking his tail.

"Tell me what?" Peachpaw leaned forward, her eyes rounding.

"Rabbittail is crazy," Sharptalon whispered, leaning closer to the apprentice. "He...." Sharptalon trailed off. He eyed Peachpaw desperately. "Don't tell anyone this, ok?" He mewed.

Peachpaw blinked, her eyes shimmering. "Ok, I promise I won't."

Sharptalon sighed. "I don't think you were born yet when Kestrelflight got really sick, right?" He asked. "Well, Kestrelflight was very sick, and Rabbittail... killed him... to put him out of his misery," he mumbled.

Peachpaw gasped, her eyes widening. "What? Why would he do that? That's crazy!" She mewed. "Does anyone else know?"

"No," Sharptalon answered, shaking his head.

"How'd you find out?" Peachpaw asked, curious.

"He told me," Sharptalon whispered. "I-"

Twistedfoot and Flamedawn walked in suddenly, herbs in their mouth.

Flamedawn stopped, blinking at Peachpaw. "Peachpaw!" He gasped, looking disappointed. "I thought I told you to sort those herbs!"

Peachpaw ducked her head in embarrassment. "Sorry, Flamedawn. I'll get right to it now," she mumbled.

"What's Sharptalon doing in here?" Flamedawn asked, blinking at the scarred brown tom.

Before Peachpaw could answer, Sharptalon cut in. "She was wanting to show her knowledge of herbs to me," he lied, flicking his tail. Getting to his paws, he added, "Peachpaw is smart, I knew she'd make a great medicine cat."

Flamedawn blinked at him. "Well she is pretty smart already," he commented, looking proud. He dropped a bristly-stemmed plant at his apprentice's paws. "Remember what this one is?" He asked.

"Horsetail," Peachpaw answered, flicking her tail.

Flamedawn purred. "Great job," he mewed.

Sharptalon picked up his mouse and padded towards the entrance, but Needlepaw suddenly walked in, two fat mice in her jaws.

"Here, eat," Needlepaw mewoed, dropping the mice at Flamedawn's paws.

Peachpaw blinked, her eyes shimmering. "Thank you, Needlepaw," she mewed

Needlepaw blinked softly at her. "You're welcome," she mewed, turning around to pad from the den.

Sharptalon hurried out after her, and padded towards the nursery. Half-way there, he spotted Crowfeather talking with Leafpool. The former medicine cat looked distressed.

"....dle being a warrior," Leafpool mumbled, her eyes glistening with grief.

"It's ok, I don't mind you going back to be a medicine cat. But how can we love eachother?" Crowfeather asked. "We need to be together for our kits, please."

"I'm sorry, but I'm best in medicine skills, and I should just go back to that role. I'd be useful there, not here," Leafpool murmured.

Crowfeather slightly bristled. He turned away from her, flattening his ears, then stopped at he saw Sharptalon. "Oh, Sharptalon," he greeted.

"Crowfeather," Sharptalon greeted.

"I forgot to ask you, how's WindClan?" Crowfeather asked. "Well, when you spent those days there, was everything ok?" He asked.

"Everything was fine," Sharptalon responded, feeling suspicion. *He's not thinking about leaving and going back to WindClan, is he*?

"How's my son?" Crowfeather asked, his eyes rounding.

"He's fine, but mad that you're gone," Sharptalon explained, flicking his tail.

"Thanks for telling me," Crowfeather mewed, padding away.

Sharptalon glanced at Leafpool, exchanging looks.

Leafpool blinked at him, grief shimmering in her eyes, then turned away, her tail drooping.

Sharptalon turned away, heading towards the nursery. *I hope Stormgaze enjoys this mouse!*

Allegiances 5

ThunderClan:

Leader: Squirrelstar- Dark ginger she-cat with green eyes and a white paw

Deputy: Ivypool- Silver-gray tabby she-cat, apprentice- Wingpaw

Medicine cats:

Mothstripe- Pretty golden tabby she-cat with a long, fluffy tail

Twistedfoot- Brown tom with a twisted paw and green eyes

Flamedawn- Dark ginger tom with blue eyes and white paws, apprentice- Peachpaw

Warriors:

Jaywing- Gray tabby she-cat with blue eyes and a torn ear

Mossheart- Black and silver she-cat with green eyes

Foxleap- reddish-brown tabby tom with green eyes

Rosepetal- Dark cream she-cat

Toadstep- Black and white tom

Sparkpelt- Flame-colored tabby she-cat with green eyes

Birchfall- Light brown tabby tom with amber eyes

Brackenclaw- White she-cat with golden splotches, apprentice- Needlepaw

Molefur- Dark cream tom with brown paws, apprentice- Blazepaw

Whitewing- Small snowy white she-cat with green eyes

Berrynose- Cream colored tom with a thick, short stump for a tail

Blossomfall- Tortoiseshell and white she-cat with petal-shaped white patches, apprentice- Sootpaw

Crowfeather- Dark-smoky, almost black tom with blue eyes, formerly WindClan

Leafpool- Brown tabby she-cat with a white chest and paws and amber eyes, former medicine cat

Bramblehawk- Dark brown tom with black stripes and yellow eyes

Firestorm- Fire-colored tom with blue eyes and a gray ear-tip, apprentice- Auburnpaw

Thistlepatch- Gray and white she-cat with strange violet eyes

Willowbrook- Gray and white tabby she-cat

Moonshine- Black and silver-white she-cat, apprentice- Rookpaw

Palewhisker- Black and white she-cat

Smallfeather- Pale yellow small tom with blue eyes

Breezestorm- White tom with gray paws

Ripplewind- Cream-white tom with a dark mask-like pattern around his eyes

Hawkfoot- Muscular brown tabby tom with amber eyes

Cloudspark- Fluffy white she-cat with yellow eyes and a torn ear

Mistfang- Dark gray tom with green eyes and a silver chest and paws, formerly rogue

Cherryflight- Dark ginger she-cat with amber eyes and gray spots and white paws, formerly rogue

Petal- Ginger she-cat with green eyes and white petal-shaped spots on her back, formerly rogue

Echostrike- Pale brown she-cat with green eyes and a white paw

Sharptalon- Large brown tom with a thick-tail and amber eyes and a torn ear

Stalkfire- Broad-shouldered, tufty-furred, flame-colored tom with green eyes

Beechfall- Pale golden-cream tabby tom

Rookclaw- Very dark gray tom with blue eyes

Apprentices:

Blazepaw- Short-furred golden tabby tom

Sootpaw- Fluffy dark gray she-cat

Needlepaw- Spiky-furred silver-gray she-cat

Auburnpaw- Auburn-colored she-cat with pale green eyes

Peachpaw- Light brown tabby she-cat with black splotches with yellow eyes

Wingpaw- Small tortoiseshell she-cat with amber eyes

Queens:

Coriander- Tortoiseshell and white she-cat with amber eyes (Nursery helper)

Phoenixwing- Slender, long-legged flame-colored she-cat with green eyes (Mother to Hawkfoot's kits: Dustkit, Grasskit, Graykit, and Lilykit)

Stormgaze- Gray tabby she-cat with beautiful green eyes (Expecting Sharptalon's kits)

Elders:

Thorn- Golden tabby tom with scratches across his face, blind in one eye

Purdy- Mottled, dark brown tabby tom

Ferncloud- Gray she-cat with green eyes

Flower- Very old cream-white she-cat, blind

Poppyfrost- Dappled, pale tortoiseshell and white she-cat with a small stub for a tail

WindClan:

Leader: Gorsestar- Mottled pale gray tabby tom with blue eyes

Deputy: Doveclaw- Gray she-cat with white paws and blue eyes and a torn ear

Medicine cats:

Rabbittail- Light brown tom with green eyes and a short tail

Warriors:

Eaglefeather- Golden tom with green eyes and a scarred muzzle

Antpelt- Lithe brown tom with one black ear

Breezepelt- Black tom with amber eyes

Heathertail- Light brown tabby she-cat with heather-blue eyes

Sunstrike- Tortoiseshell she-cat with a large white mark on her

forehead

Swallowtail- Dark gray she-cat

Boulderfur- Large pale gray tom

Larkwing- Pale brown tabby she-cat

Sedgewhisker- Light brown tabby she-cat

Slightfoot- Black tom with a flash of white on his chest

Thornstem- Gold-brown tom with golden eyes

Windflower- Small light brown tabby she-cat

Smokehaze- Gray she-cat

Brindlewing- Mottled brown she-cat

Flashfire- Dark ginger-brown tabby tom with amber eyes and white splotches, formerly rogue

Sparkfur- Spiky-furred ginger she-cat with green eyes, formerly rogue

Ravenstorm- Black tom with white ears

Patchshade- White she-cat patched with splotches of gold and black

Clouddust- Fluffy light brown tabby tom

Queens:

Heathertail- Light brown tabby she-cat with heather-blue eyes (Expecting Breezepelt's kits)

RiverClan:

Leader: Flowerstar- Tortoiseshell and white she-cat with green eyes

Deputy: Reedwhisker- Slender black tom

Medicine cats:

Mothwing- Dappled dark golden she-cat

Willowshine- Sleek thick-furred dark gray tabby she-cat

Sapbriar- Milky-white she-cat with gray paws

Warriors:

Mistyfoot- Blue-gray she-cat with blue eyes

Rust- Large dark brown tom with amber eyes

Mintfur- Light gray tabby tom

Icewing- White she-cat with blue eyes

Pebblefoot- Mottled pale gray tom

Rushtail- Light brown tabby tom

Hollowflight- Dark brown tabby tom

Pineshade- Dark ginger tom with a black splotch on his back

Curlfeather- Pale brown she-cat, apprentice- Pigeonpaw

Podlight- Sturdy gray and white tom, apprentice- Flintpaw

Mallownose- Light brown tom

Petalfur- Gray and white she-cat with amber eyes

Lizardtail- Light brown tom

Brightmorning- White she-cat with blue eyes

Beetleshell- Black tom with brown paws

Brackenpelt- Tortoiseshell she-cat, apprentice- Briarpaw

Owlnose- Brown tabby tom, apprentice- Dawnpaw

Jayclaw- Gray tom, apprentice- Alderpaw

Nightsky- Dark gray she-cat with blue eyes

Breezeheart- Brown and white she-cat

Apprentices:

Briarpaw- Black she-cat with brown paws and blue eyes

Dawnpaw- Light brown she-cat with green eyes

Alderpaw- Dark brown tom with a black splotch over his eye

Pigeonpaw- Light gray tom with amber eyes

Flintpaw- Dark gray tom with yellow and white splotches

Queens:

Iceriver- Fluffy white she-cat with ice-blue eyes (Expecting Reedwhisker's kits)

Lakeheart- Gray tabby she-cat (Expecting Lizardtail's kits)

Elders:

Duskpelt- Brown tabby she-cat

ShadowClan:

Leader: Tigerstar- Big dark tiger-striped tabby tom with amber eyes and a torn ear

Deputy: Tawnypelt- Pale tortoiseshell she-cat

Medicine cats:

Flametail- Flame-colored tom with blue eyes, apprentice- Turtlepaw

Ravenbreeze- Small black she-cat

Warriors:

Ebonyfur- Black tom with green eyes, apprentice- Adderpaw

Dawnpelt- Cream-furred she-cat

Scorchfur- Dark gray tom

Applefur- Mottled brown she-cat, apprentice- Slatepaw

Pinenose- Black she-cat

Sparrowtail- Large brown tabby tom

Ferretclaw- Cream and gray tom, apprentice- Puddlepaw

Spikefur- Dark brown tom with tufty fur on his head

Stonewing- White tom

Strikestone- Brown-striped tabby tom

Shrewfoot- Gray she-cat with black feet

Cloverfoot- Gray tabby she-cat

Yarrowleaf- Ginger she-cat with yellow eyes

Berryheart- Black and white she-cat

Juniperclaw- Sleek black tom, apprentice- Shadepaw

Crowclaw- Black tom with yellow eyes, apprentice- Birchpaw

Smoketail- Dark gray tabby she-cat with bright green eyes, apprentice- Lionpaw

Needletail- Silver-gray she-cat with green eyes and a white chest, apprentice- Leafpaw

Darkspots- Ginger tom dappled with black flecks

Skyfrost- Sleek, light gray tom, formerly loner

Apprentices:

Turtlepaw- Small tortoiseshell she-cat with a dull white chest

Leafpaw- Brown tabby she-cat with black paws

Shadepaw- Dark gray she-cat

Adderpaw- Dark brown tabby tom with a pale gray underbelly

Birchpaw- Beige tom

Slatepaw- Sleek gray tom

Lionpaw- Yellow she-cat with amber eyes

Puddlepaw- Brown tom with white splotches

Pebblepaw- Mottled gray tabby tom with black splotches

Nettlepaw- Spiky-furred black tom

Queens:

Snowbird- Pure white she-cat (Mother to Scorchfur's kits: Gullkit, Conekit, and Frondkit)

Grassheart- Pale brown tabby she-cat (Mother to Stonewing's kits: Flowerkit, Whorlkit, and Snakekit)

Elders:

Smokefoot- Black tom

Kinkfur- Dark gray tabby she-cat with long fur that sticks out in all angles

Ratscar- Dark brown tom with a long scar across his back

Rogues/DarkClan:

Leader: Darktail- Big white tom with black spots around his blue eyes and a long black tail

Deputy: Rain- Long-furred gray tom with green eyes

Medicine cat: Arch- Brown tabby tom with a white belly and paws

Fighters/Hunters:

Crowfrost- Black and white tom

Redwillow- Mottled brown and ginger tom

Moldclaw- Large black tom with a ginger patch on muzzle and chin and with amber eyes

Goldensmoke- Pale golden-brown she-cat with blue eyes

Lightningstrike- Mottled gray tabby tom with amber eyes

Shimmer- Black and white she-cat

Moon- Silver she-cat

Nettle- Brown tabby tom with long, spiky fur

Raven- Long-furred black she-cat

Roach- Silver-gray tom

Gravel- Slender gray tom

Sleekwhisker- Golden she-cat with yellow eyes

Snake- Golden-brown she-cat with yellow-green eyes

Thistle- Muscular gray tom with blue eyes

Snowbreeze- White tom with blue eyes, formerly ThunderClan

Stripe- Gray tabby tom

Reed- Brown tabby tom with green eyes

Minnow- Silver tabby she-cat

Ice Shadow- Large, broad-shouldered white tom with blue eyes and a black stripe above his nose

Shredfang- Mottled ginger tom

Slateclaw- Dappled silver she-cat

Splotch- White she-cat with gray splotches

Dart- Lean black tom

Ninx- Lean, dark blueish-black she-cat with yellow eyes

Tyran- Large, dark blueish-black tom with green eyes and a white belly

Viper- Small, skinny brown tom with striking yellow eyes

Badger- Black tom with a white stripe running down his back

Mothers:

Frostheart- White she-cat with yellow eyes and a feathery tail, formerly ThunderClan (Mother to Falconflight's kits: Snow, Tabby, and Featherkit)

Snow- White she-cat (Expecting Thistle's kits)

Cats outside Clans:

Lucky- Black tom, kittypet

Chafree- Plump pale brown tom, kittypet

Stormy- Large dark gray tom with amber eyes, kittypet

Burntkit- Very dark flame-colored tom-kit with a white chest

Pearlkit- Pure white she-kit

Chapter 40

Sharptalon dug into the small mouse he'd got from the fresh-kill pile. Prey was running low already. Two days had passed.

Stormgaze was looking around nervously. "I'm worried that not all of us will get through this Leaf-bare," she mumbled.

Sharptalon looked up at her. "It's still only Leaf-fall, we can make it if we stock up on herbs and prey," she mewed.

"But look at how many cats we have in our Clan. There's so many," Stormgaze mewed. "There's hardly enough prey to go around," she pointed out.

Sharptalon took another bite of mouse, still feeling hungry. He thought about Crowfeather, and if the tom would leave. *One less cat.*

"I hope we can all make it," Stormgaze mewed. She then stretched her jaws in a yawn.

"Huh, well, don't worry," Sharptalon murmured.

"Sharptalon!" A voice called.

Stormgaze blinked at Sharptalon. "See you later," she sighed.

Sharptalon nuzzled her head. "Bye," he purred. He raced over to Ivypool.

"You're on this patrol, Sharptalon," Ivypool meowed.

"Huh, well looks like I'll be spending time with my mate later," Sharptalon sighed, glancing over at the patrol consisting with Rosepetal, Firestorm, and Auburnpaw.

"Huh, well yeah, looks like it," Ivypool retorted, a faint growl in her voice. "Hurry up. I've gotta get all the patrols out so I can take Wingpaw out," she meowed.

Sharptalon padded towards the patrol, his thoughts racing. *Why can't I stay in camp with Stormgaze? She's been worrying me.*

Firestorm looked up, his whiskers twitching. "Ah, Sharptalon," he greeted.

Sharptalon blinked at him. "Firestorm," he greeted. "What border are we patrolling now?"

"ShadowClan's, and we might patrol the rogue's border too," Firestorm meowed. He flicked his tail. "Come on, lets go."

Sharptalon padded through the forest with the patrol, taking the rear. Leaves crunched under his paws, and a chilly breeze settled through his fur. Frost covered most of the ground.

"We might want to be careful of that fox too," Rosepetal meowed stiffly.

Sharptalon pricked his ears as he heard birds singing in the trees. One fluttered to another branch, sending some dead bark flakes showering to the ground.

Auburnpaw flicked her tail. "I haven't seen ShadowClan yet," she mewed.

"Well, lets hope we don't," Rosepetal mewed.

"They're not that bad anymore," Sharptalon pointed out, although having no idea of what the Clan was like before.

"Well you never know when they could get a change in heart or a... bad leader," Rosepetal sighed, flicking her tail.

Sharptalon snapped to the right as he heard paw steps. Through the denseness of the pines, he saw a patrol. "Well, Auburnpaw, there's your wish," Sharptalon joked.

Juniperclaw, at the head of the patrol, glanced at Sharptalon. "Oh, a ThunderClan patrol, finally!" He meowed. Needletail, Ebonyfur, and Cloverfoot were with him.

Sharptalon bristled, unsheathing his claws. *What do they want?*

"Sorry to disturb you. But we wanted to know if you knew where Darkspots was," Juniperclaw puffed.

"Why us?" Firestorm asked, whiskers twitching.

"He went missing yesterday. We can't find him," Juniperclaw sighed. "We don't know where he would've gone, or why he left. He never said he was going anywhere," Juniperclaw meowed.

"Well, we haven't seen him in our territory. Maybe check the river?" Firestorm suggested. "Or ask WindClan or RiverClan."

"Why would he even be in RiverClan?" Needletail growled.

Sharptalon bristled, flattening his ears. "Well why do you think he'd be here, huh?" He hissed.

"Hey, I'm not the deputy, I didn't send this patrol here," Needletail growled, flattening her ears.

Sharptalon stepped forward, his tail lashing. *What's wrong with her?* He felt a growl rising in his throat.

Needletail unsheathed her claws, glaring at Sharptalon.

"Sharptalon! Stop!" Firestorm hissed. "You don't need to claw eachother over some stupid reason, stop," he growled.

Sharptalon backed away from the ShadowClan border, but then Needletail leaped on him, her claws raking his shoulders. He hissed in annoyance as Needletail had him pinned, but then remembered his moves. He kicked out with his legs, his hind-claws striking Needletail's belly.

Needletail tumbled over the border, blood dripping from her belly. She glared at Sharptalon.

Firestorm glared at Needletail, then glared at Juniperclaw. "You're completely fine with her lashing like that? Sharptalon had already backed away!" He growled.

"I told you ShadowClan was no good," Rosepetal hissed, lashing her tail.

Juniperclaw glared at her. "Hey! Take that back!" He hissed.

The bushes rustled suddenly, and Ivypool came from the bushes, Wingpaw at her side. "What's going on?" She hissed.

Juniperclaw, probably suddenly realizing that he was outnumbered now, turned around and dashed into the bushes, his patrol following him.

"Stupid Needletail attacked Sharptalon," Firestorm growled. He lashed his tail.

Ivypool glanced at Sharptalon. "Sharptalon, are you ok?" She asked, looking over him.

Sharptalon felt a few small scratches on his shoulder. "Yeah, I'm fine," he meowed.

"They said something about one of their warriors missing. But it's none of our concern," Firestorm sighed, his tail flicking.

"Sharptalon, I'll take your place on this patrol," Ivypool meowed, flicking her tail. "Stormgaze had her kits."

Chapter 41

Sharptalon rushed into camp, feeling breathless. He immediately rushed over to the nursery, where the medicine cats were standing outside. He pushed through the brambles and overhanging ferns, seeing Stormgaze stretched out in her nest, four kits suckling at her belly.

"Stormgaze, I'm here!" Sharptalon mewed, scrambling to her nest.

Flamedawn squeezed into the den, Peachpaw at his side. "Your new kits are beautiful," Flamedawn purred.

Stormgaze perked her head up as she saw Sharptalon. "Sharptalon!" She gasped. "Our kits...."

Sharptalon crouched down, glancing at his four kits. There was a dark yellow she-kit with black stripes, a silver-gray tabby tom with black paws, a black she-kit and tufted ears, and a gray tabby tom-kit with flame-colored markings.

Stormgaze's eyes were dull with sleep. She blinked slowly. "I was waiting to name them. Why don't you name the little yellow one?"

Sharptalon licked his mate's cheek. "Thank you," he whispered softly. He thought for a moment as he glanced down at the black-striped yellow she-kit. *She looks like a bumblebee*. "I'll name her Beekit."

"That is a perfect name," Stormgaze purred. She looked at the silver-gray tabby tom with black paws. "Why don't you name him as well?" She asked.

Sharptalon thought for a moment, then thought of a name. "Blackkit, for his black paws," he meowed, flicking his tail.

Stormgaze blinked warmly. "It's perfect," she mewed.

Sharptalon glanced at the gray tom-kit with fire-colored markings. "He looks the most like you. You should name him," he suggested.

Stormgaze glanced at her son, her eyes shimmering. "I'll name him Smokykit, in honor of my father."

Sharptalon gazed warmly at her. "It's a perfect name for him. I like it. Your father was an amazing fighter."

Coriander, who was watching Stormgaze, blinked warmly at her. "That's beautiful, Stormgaze, I'm glad you want to keep Smoky's memory alive."

Stormgaze's gaze then shifted to the last kit, the black she-kit with tufted ears. "I'll name her Tuftkit, for her tufted ears."

Sharptalon licked the top of her head. "They're perfect names," he purred.

Before Stormgaze could reply, the brambles and ferns rustled behind Sharptalon. Turning around, Sharptalon saw his friend, Stalkfire, rush into the den. Phoenixwing and her kits were right behind him.

"How is my sister doing?" Stalkfire asked, glancing at Sharptalon.

"Tired, but fine," Sharptalon replied.

Stalkfire looked at his sister's kits and began to purr. "Wow. They're beautiful. Monarchwing would love them," he mewed.

"Oh, they're so lovely, Stormgaze. I'm proud of you," Phoenixwing purred.

"Phoenixwing? Can we play with them?" Graykit asked, his silver-gray eyes shimmering.

"No, Graykit. They are very young," Phoenixwing meowed. "Maybe you can play with them after a half-moon."

"What are their names?" Stalkfire asked, glancing at Sharptalon.

Sharptalon sat up, curling his tail around his paws. "From left to right: Beekit, Blackkit, Tuftkit, and Smokykit."

"Smokykit?" Stalkfire echoed. "In honor of our father, Smoky?"

"Yes," Stormgaze answered.

"All cats old enough to hunt, join beneath the High-Ledge for a Clan meeting!" Squirrelstar's voice rang outside.

Sharptalon licked his mate's cheek. "I'll be right back," he whispered. Turning around, he left the den with Stalkfire.

The Clan had already gathered outside, their gazes fixed on their leader.

Squirrelstar lifted her tail. "Tonight is the gathering, and I will choose who will go," she meowed. She began to look around. "Sharptalon, Mossheart, Foxleap, Bramblehawk, Whitewing, Birchfall, Blossomfall, Cloudspark, Petal, Stalkfire, Beechfall, Rookclaw, Needlepaw, Auburnpaw, and Wingpaw."

Sharptalon stood up, heading towards the camp entrance.

Needlepaw rushed up to Sharptalon suddenly. "Wonder how this gathering will go."

"Yeah," Sharptalon murmured. "Why did Squirrelstar send me to this gathering... She knows I want to spend time with my new kits."

Needlepaw twitched her whiskers. "Well... At least we can spend time together," she mewed.

Sharptalon glanced at her, narrowing his eyes. "What do you mean?" He asked.

Needlepaw scuffed at the dirt. "Well.. Uh.. I kinda like you,"

Needlepaw meowed.

Sharptalon held back a growl. "Don't you realize I'm with Stormgaze? She just had my kits!" Sharptalon hissed.

"I'm sorry. I do realize that. But you can drop her for me." Needlepaw then turned towards him. "Stormgaze is weak. You need a stronger mate."

Sharptalon felt outraged. He turned towards the apprentice and struck her ear with a paw. He couldn't control his anger. He flattened his ears, growling. "Sorry," he hissed. Sharptalon trotted away from her.

Stalkfire was walking with Bramblehawk. He turned, noticing Sharptalon. "Oh, Sharptalon!" His whiskers twitched. "You look mad. Something wrong?"

"Nothing," Sharptalon sighed. He lashed has tail. *Needlepaw is stupid. Doesn't she know I'm very close to Stormgaze?*

Stalkfire ushered Bramblehawk away. He glanced at Sharptalon. "Care to tell me what's wrong? I know that look," he mewed.

Sharptalon hesitated. *Well jee, what a good friend*. "Needlepaw said that she likes me," he sighed. "I don't know what's wrong with her."

"Maybe she meant it in a different way?" Stalkfire suggested.

Sharptalon flattened his ears. "I don't even want to know. But I got mad and accidently clawed her ear," he admitted.

"That's fine," Stalkfire sighed. "Maybe you just haven't gotten over Lighttail. But don't worry. I still miss Monarchwing to this day," he murmured.

"I'm over Lighttail, I think," Sharptalon meowed. *I regret killing him. Oh why did I do that?* Sharptalon lifted his head slowly to the night sky, blinking at the twinkling stars. "But I can't miss him when he's up there, watching over me."

"That's great to hear. I'm just sensitive," Stalkfire sighed.

The two toms continued walking together until they reached The Great Blossom.

Sharptalon sat down, his tail curling around his paws. Wonder what the leaders have to report.

Tigerstar was up on his branch, his amber gaze gliding over all the cats. He was shifting his paws nervously, and he looked a bit fearful.

Flowerstar shifted her paws as well, her tail, which was hanging off the branch, was twitching.

Sharptalon narrowed his eyes. *What do they have to say?*

Squirrelstar stood up on her branch. "We may begin now. I will go first," she announced, lashing her tail. "One of our warriors, Lighttail, was killed by a lone fox while hunting with Sharptalon. However, when we went back, we did not find his body. But still, we grieve for him deeply," Squirrelstar mewed, her gaze clouded.

"What? Dead?" Flowers tar echoed. "Then can you explain a cat named 'Lighttail' coming into my camp two days ago? He was wounded and said he wanted to join."

Sharptalon froze. *Lighttail... lived? I killed him!* He shifted his paws.

Squirrelstar blinked in surprise and narrowed her eyes. "Sharptalon?" She mewed, turning to him. "Did Lighttail really die?"

"Yes!" Sharptalon gasped. "That fox tore out his throat! There's no way he could of lived that!" He mewled. "And plus if he did live, why wouldn't he go back to camp to get his wounds treated?"

"You've got a point. I believe you," Squirrelstar sighed. She glanced at Flowerstar. "Well can Lighttail return to us?"

"I'm afraid not. He wishes to stay in RiverClan," Flowerstar meowed. "He told me he wants to stay because he wants to start something new, and that there's a cat in our camp that he likes."

"Traitor!" A ThunderClan cat called out. A few other cats agreed.

"He faked his death just to go to RiverClan!" Foxleap growled.

Tigerstar lifted his tail for silence. "Let's forget about that. Darkspots has been found, but it wasn't what we hoped for. He joined the rogues along with Skyfrost. The rogues outnumber us now."

"Huh, ShadowClan might as well join the rogues if its warriors please to be with them," Gorsestar growled.

"Shut up," Tigerstar hissed, lashing his tail.

"Well Skyfrost was a rogue before," Squirrelstar pointed out.

"True. But I thought he was loyal," Tigerstar sighed. "Whatever. Gorsestar, have anything to report?" He asked.

"Nothing important," Gorsestar sighed. "Since every other leader had something important to report, then it doesn't matter," he meowed.

"Ok.... then the gathering is dismissed," Squirrelstar meowed. She climbed down from her branch, and so did the other leaders.

Sharptalon rushed into the crowd of RiverClan cats, hoping to find Lighttail. He noticed the pale yellow pelt in the darkness.

"Lighttail!" Sharptalon called out. He rushed over to his brother. The tom had a scar across his throat.

Lighttail froze, glancing at him. He lashed his tail. He was with someone. "Nightsky, go away for a moment, I need to talk to my brother," he meowed.

Nightsky dipped her head. "Alright," she meowed, leaping away.

Lighttail ushered Sharptalon away from the crowd of cats and into a thick patch of reeds. He glared at his brother. "What do *you* want? Come to ask how I'm alive?"

"Well... yes. I thought you were dead," Sharptalon meowed in disbelief. Is this really my brother?

"One word. StarClan. One moment I was dead, the next moment I woke up in StarClan. They gave me a life for some reason and I woke up alive," Lighttail explained.

Sharptalon blinked at him. "Why didn't you come back to ThunderClan? Wingpaw is devastated! And you're just giving her up for some RiverClan she-cat?" He hissed. "Is this what kin is to you?"

Lighttail hesitated, remorse clouding his eyes. "I'm sorry. I couldn't go back though."

"Why?" Sharptalon asked.

"I-I felt what you felt when I died. Fear, fear of your secret being revealed, and guilt. You felt guilty killing me," Lighttail mewed.

Sharptalon felt remorse. "Yes, I did. And I'm sorry I killed you. If I could go back and change that, I would, I swear."

Lighttail sighed. "I'm sorry, but I'm not coming back to ThunderClan. I just can't find a purpose. I feel like I let Wingpaw down. Maybe StarClan gave me this life so I could start over. After all, my mate died, our mother is dead, our father betrayed us, our sister betrayed us, and I wasn't strong enough to take care of my daughter. So now I'm starting a new life. I've made friends with Nightsky and I think she already likes me," Lighttail mewed, closing his eyes. He turned to his brother, his eyes clouding. "Can you promise me you'll take care of Wingpaw for me?"

Lighttail.... is this really how you felt?""Yes," Sharptalon meowed. "I promise I'll take care of her. I'll always be by her side whenever she needs me," he murmured, his voice cracking with sadness.

"I should go," Lighttail meowed. He threw a glance at Sharptalon once more before brushing through the reeds to leave.

Sharptalon hesitated. *My brother sure is something....*

Chapter 42

A half-moon had passed, and now Sharptalon's kits were running around the nursery. They were very energetic and always played with the other kits.

Smokykit then launched himself on his father and pummeled his hind paws on Sharptalon's fur.

Sharptalon pretended to fall over. "Oh no! I'm going to lose!" He meowed, waving his paws as Blackkit joined in.

"Die filthy badger!" Smokykit roared, raising his tail.

Stormgaze watched them play, amusement shining in her green eyes. "You two will be amazing fighters," she purred.

"Yes, they certainly will be amazing fighters," Sharpton agreed with his mate, purring. He watched as Beekit and Tuftkit tumbled in their nest, fighting.

"Well, the fun's over kits, it's time for bed," Stormgaze huffed, laying down. "Come on now," she meowed, waving her paw over. Her jaws gaped in a yawn.

"Awww, do we have to sleep now?" Blackkit asked, his tiny tail lashing with annoyance. His eyes shone in the darkness.

"Yes. Phoenixwing's kits have gone to sleep already. We don't want to wake them. Come on, you four have stayed up late enough," Stormgaze meowed, glancing her her kits.

Sharptalon sat up and groomed his paw. "Yes, I'm getting tired. Listen to your mother please," he meowed between licks. He stopped grooming and saw all four kits curled up at their mother's belly. He slowly padded towards his mate.

Stormgaze lifted her head as her mate approached her. She purred as he licked her head. "Goodnight," Sharptalon whispered.

"Goodnight, love," Stormgaze whispered.

Sharptalon turned around and trudged to his nest. Sleep immediately dragged him into a void of darkness.

"Sharptalon."

Sharptalon woke up. *I'm in the Dark Forest.* Tigerstar was in front of him, his amber eyes shining.

"The time has come for when doom sets on ThunderClan. Are you ready, Sharptalon, to rest here forever?" Tigerstar asked, his tail lashing.

Sharptalon narrowed his eyes, blinking at the dark tom. "What do you mean?" He asked, confused.

"I think you know what that means. You should. StarClan is trying to take you away from your mate and kits. They want to make your life miserable," Tigerstar meowed, his voice drilling into Sharptalon's ears.

"StarClan would never do that. They brought Lighttail back at least," Sharptalon meowed, his voice cracking.

"But not for you. He was brought back for a new life. He's forgotten about you. Just know that a great fire share burn everything you know," Tigerstar meowed. His figure began to fade.

"Wait!" Sharptalon yowled. Suddenly he jerked awake in his nest, his fur bushed. He looked around, his claws sinking into the soft moss of his nest.

"Are you ok?" A voice asked in the back of the den. It was Jaywing.

Sharptalon glanced at her. "Yes, I'm fine."

Jaywing's eyes were clouded. She padded closer. "Hey, I'm sorry I haven't been there for you. We used to be great friends when you were just a kit. Cloudspark carried me away," she meowed all at once.

"Don't be sorry. I had Stormgaze," Sharptalon mewed. Memories of his old friend flashed in his mind. He remembered when Jaywing would always play with him when no one else would.

"Can I tell you something?" Jaywing asked. She came closer until she was laying beside Sharptalon. "But please don't tell anyone else."

"Sure," Sharptalon meowed. His thoughts were clouded with Tigerstar telling him about him being in the Dark Forest forever.

"I-I never admitted to anyone but.. I actually liked Cloudspark. Like... liked like... and she liked me back," Jaywing meowed. "I never knew I could like the same gender, but going through that kind of changed me. We grew so close. Sorry if this seems weird," Jaywing meowed, shifting her paws.

Sharptalon's thoughts clouded. "It's fine. I'll keep it secret, I promise. It is strange but...." his thoughts crowded with Wolffang, his friend. The closest friend he'd had. *But we aren't like that.* "I have to go," Sharptalon meowed.

"Bye," Jaywing meowed.

Sharptalon padded out into the weak sunlight and padded across the frosted crowd. Parting his jaws, be could smell rain in the air. Looking up, he saw very dark storm clouds hanging overhead. They looked dangerous. *I've never seen stormclouds that dark!* Sharptalon padded towards Squirrelstar's den.

The dark flame-colored leader was talking with Mothstripe. She lifted her head at Sharptalon's appearance. "Sharptalon? Why are you here?"

"Sorry to disturb you, but I just wanted to let you know about those

clouds out there," Sharptalon meowed. "This is serious. They look dangerous."

"Let me see," Squirrelstar meowed. She brushed past Sharptalon, then looked up at the sky. Her tail bushed up. "Great StarClan," she mumbled.

Mothstripe came out of the den and stood beside Sharptalon's muscular frame. "This does look quite intimidating," she meowed. She twitched her whiskers. "Squirrelstar, I think you should order the warriors to stay in their dens. Once the storm starts, the winds can be strong enough to make a branch fall on someone," she pointed out.

"Alright," Squirrelstar meowed, fear inching her voice. She stood on the edge of High-Ledge and lifted her chin. "All cats old enough to hunt, join beneath High-Ledge for a Clan meeting!" She yowled.

The Clan gathered underneath the rock quickly, their fur bristling. Their gazes were mixed with fear and anxiety.

Sharptalon then felt a raindrop land on his nose. *It's started.* Soon, more drops began to fall lightly.

"A storm is brewing right above us. And by the look of those clouds, we could be in danger. I advise all of you to stay in your dens," Squirrelstar meowed. "The Clan is dismissed, but Firestorm, I'd like for you to come forward," Squirrelstar called.

The rain began to get harder around them and Sharptalon was soaked in no time. Wind began to swirl dead leaves in the clearing, and the branches of leafless trees shook and swayed.

"Yes?" Firestorm prompted, glancing at Squirrelstar.

"I would like you to go with Sharptalon and find the patrols I sent out earlier. Hurry though, please," Squirrelstar pleaded, her eyes clouding with anxiety.

Before the two toms could move, a large bolt of lightning came down from the sky like a long, jagged claw splitting the sky. It struck a tree in the forest not that far from camp. Sharptalon

bristled as the roar of thunder rippled through the sky.

"Hurry!" Sharptalon yowled to Firestorm as he leaped down the rocks. He could see something bright through the thickness of the trees. Racing out of camp, he realized he could smell smoke. *This can't be good!*

Chapter 43

Getting closer to the fire, Sharptalon realized that he heard cats yowling. Were they fighting? Surely it couldn't be that.

Sharptalon saw the patrol. It consisted of Bramblehawk, Mossheart, Beechfall, and Berrynose. He could recognize the rogues: Rain, Crowfrost, Ice Shadow, Moon, Redwillow, and... *Snowbreeze*.

"Come on, we've got to help them," Sharptalon whispered to Firestorm.

Firestorm crouched low. "Let's go then," he meowed, lashing his tail.

Sharptalon leaped forward. He soared through the air, his claws extended. He landed on Rain, who was attacking Bramblehawk. This was the rogue that had taken his mother and mentor from him. *And I won't let him take another life!* He slashed at Rain's eye, his claws sinking into the soft flesh.

Rain yowling in surprise and pain. But he quickly slithered from Sharptalon's grip. He backed away, three scratches across his eye. Blood trickled down his face. He was panting. He hissed in Sharptalon's face and rammed his face into Sharptalon's chest, knocking him off balance.

Sharptalon yowled in surprise. He was pinned now. *But you've done wrong,* he thought, narrowing his eyes at Rain. He hooked his claws into the rogue's shoulders and began to pummel his belly with sharp hind claws. He kept raking the soft fur until he felt flesh rip.

Rain yowled in pain and jumped away from him, but was caught in Bramblehawk's grip. He yowled in pain again as Bramblehawk pummeled at his spine and held his scruff.

Sharptalon then stumbled as he felt a body crash into his. *Darktail!* Sharptalon was confused. *What? He wasn't here before!* The tom was scratch-free, and wasn't exhausted.

"You're surprised to see me here, aren't you?" Darktail prompted. "We will kill all of you. Come on, Sharptalon, join our side to kill these weak cats," he whispered smoothly.

"No!" Sharptalon yowled. He struck Darktail's cheek with a paw. Blood spattered the ground.

Darktail flattened his ears. "You little-!"

Suddenly, a large tree branch fell from the burning tree. The fighting space was filling with smoke and the fire was raging out of control. The ran pounded down harder and harder and thunder echoed everywhere.

Darktail, who had been distracted by the falling branch, didn't expect Sharptalon to attack.

Sharptalon pummeled his belly and kicked him off. He jumped back as Darktail crashed into another rogue. But he quickly got up and charged at Darktail. Sharptalon jumped back, dodging the white tom's attack. He lashed his tail, and stood up, his paws slashing at Darktail's ears.

Darktail reared and lashed a paw across Sharptalon's, slicing it open. Blood spattered the ground.

Suddenly, Sharptalon yowled in surprise as he felt a body crash into him from behind. Twisting has head, he saw the white pelt of Snowbreeze, his father. He curled his lip in rage.

"Oh don't be mad, Sharptalon, I'm only here to kill you," Snowbreeze hissed cruelly. He then sunk his claws into his son's shoulders.

Sharptalon growled. He struggled under his father's grip, and struggled even harder when Darktail joined in on pinning him. But Sharptalon wouldn't give up. He lashed out and clawed Darktail's leg, then used the rest of his strength to spring upward.

Sharptalon jumped backwards. Smoke was hanging in the air, and he could feel the heat from the flames. Sharptalon slightly turned around. Some of the snow on the ground had melted, revealing dead grass, which only fueled the fire even more. Sharptalon turned back to his attackers, who were coming closer and closer to him.

Darktail then lunged forward, his claws extended. Sharptalon jumped back, but not quick enough. Darktail's claws slid down his face, drawing long scratches. Blood spattered the ground and trickled down his face.

Snowbreeze then lashed out at Sharptalon's ears, slicing the tip. Blood trickled down Sharptalon's face.

"I knew you were weak. Fight back!" Snowbreeze hissed in a taunting voice, his tail lashing with excitement.

Sharptalon flattened his ears. He dodged his father's attack, but then was filled with anxiety as he felt the heat getting even warmer behind him.

Snowbreeze yowled and then lunged forward, his paws lashing out at Sharptalon's eyes.

Sharptalon leaped backwards and then yowled in pain as he felt the tip of his tail start burning. Panicking, he turned, seeing the tip of his tail on fire. Pain sliced through him like claws ripping him open. Sharptalon reached for his tail, trying to out out the flame, but yowled in pain yet again as he felt claws rake down his side, drawing long gashes.

Suddenly, Wingpaw leaped on Darktail, Ivypool at her side. "Get away from him!" Wingpaw yowled, tackling Darktail to the ground. Ivypool joined in on attacking Darktail, and the rogue leader was soon been chased away.

Sharptalon lunged at Snowbreeze, his claws sinking into his father's shoulders.

Snowbreeze kicked at Sharptalon's stomach and then struggled out from under him. He hissed at Sharptalon and then lunged forward,

his fangs bared. "I will kill you for once and for all."

Sharptalon bared his fangs. "But my memory still lives on!" He hissed. He began to pummel his father's belly with hind paws. Fur was tearing easily and blood stained his white pelt as Sharptalon's claws raked flesh.

Snowbreeze didn't back down even though his eyes were clouded with pain. He instead leaned forward and clamped his jaws around his son's neck.

Sharptalon was getting weaker with each kick. *I can't die!* Panic rose up inside him. Blood bubbled in his throat. He then kicked with all his might and threw Snowbreeze off of him. He hissed in surprise as Snowbreeze had tugged on his throat. Fur and a bit of skin pulled and blood leaped in the air.

Snowbreeze was obviously exhausted, but wouldn't stop until he'd killed his son. His eyes were clouded with fear though. He looked behind him and saw the fire raging. Rain soaked his pelt.

Sharptalon rose to his paws. He could hardly breathe because of the thick smoke and his throat wound. *But I must end this. I'll charge forward and throw him in the fire and he'll die. I might get a little burnt on my face, but I will live.*

Snowbreeze panted heavily, his paws stained with blood. His ears were torn and bleeding, and blood was trickling down his face. He stared at Sharptalon, anger in his eyes. Blood stained the ground under him, and blood was dripping from his torn belly.

Sharptalon readied himself to charge into him. He could see his reflection in his father's eyes. Then, Sharptalon charged forward, his head striking Snowbreeze's chest. Snowbreeze tried to stay his ground but was pushed back into the raging flames.

Sharptalon growled and shoved his head under his father's belly and then shoved forward, knocking him backwards, but then felt claws dig into his shoulders deeply. Sharptalon yowled as he was dragged into the hungry flames with his father.

Sharptalon screamed in pain as he was engulfed in raging flames. Heat scorched his fur, burning it off. The flames ate at his skin and burnt his face and legs and tail. He screamed in agony, his eyes widening. His body was going into shock. He stumbled over his father's already dead body and kicked and rolled, his screams beginning to fade with his vision.

While Sharptalon's vision was fading into black, a spirit appeared in front of him. The faint outline of Fluffypelt, his mother, was all he could see. She stared down at his burning body. Then Sharptalon's vision faded to complete darkness.

Sharptalon woke up, his body aching. The ground beneath him was cold and the grass was dead. The trees around him were dead and skinny. *I'm in the Dark Forest.*

"Sharptalon..." Wolffang appeared in front of the dead tom. "Y-you died," he whispered. "That wasn't supposed to happen."

Sharptalon stared at him blankly. "I- I didn't even know I would die," he mumbled. He expected Snowbreeze to be here. "Where is my father?"

"Not here. His spirit is resting somewhere else. But don't worry, it's not StarClan," Wolffang meowed, sitting down.

"Now I know what Tigerstar meant when he told me that last night," Sharptalon sighed, hanging his head. He thought about Stormgaze and his kits. *The last word I said to her was 'goodnight.'*

Wolffang came closer. "Our army is only building more and more," he mumbled. "It won't be long before the Clans *suffer*."

Epilogue

Stormgaze rushed up to the cats who had returned to the camp. They were all injured badly. "What happened?" She demanded. Rain soaked her fur.

"Rogues attacked us," Bramblehawk panted, his eye closed from a bleeding scratch.

Stormgaze looked at the patrol. Squirrelstar had sent Sharptalon and Firestorm to go and find the patrols, but Sharptalon wasn't with them.

"Where is Sharptalon?!" Stormgaze asked in panic. Her heart was pounding.

"I-I'm sorry, Stormgaze, but Sharptalon is dead," Mossheart sighed, her eyes clouded.

Stormgaze bristled and froze. Her heart pounded harder and her heart seemed to break in half. "No! He can't be dead!" She cried out. She lashed her tail. "Who killed him?" She demanded.

"He pushed his father into the flames but... his father took him with him," Ivypool meowed, coming up. Wingpaw was at her mentor's side. Her eyes were clouded with grief.

"You let him die?!" Stormgaze hissed, outraged. She lashed her tail even more. *Heartless cats!* "How could you of just stood there and watch him get pulled into the flames?" She hissed at Ivypool, glaring at the deputy.

Wingpaw stood protectively in front of her mentor. "Stop! This isn't her fault! I know how you feel, but his death is nobody's fault. We were fighting Darktail and couldn't save him."

Stormgaze glared at them. "Sharptalon is gone now," she mumbled, her eyes clouding. "I'll never see him again, and the kits will grow

up without him," she whimpered.

Mothstripe, Twistedfoot, Flamedawn, Leafpool, and Auburnpaw hurried over to the injured warriors, herbs in their jaws.

Stormgaze was drifting off in her thoughts. *Poor Sharptalon. I have nothing to remind me of him. And he just was gone... just gone like that*! She whipped around and sat in the clearing. The rain soaked her pelt. *Rest well, love. I won't ever forget you.*